# THE MOST FOOLISH OF ALL THINGS

H. ANTHONY

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# THE MOST FOOLISH OF ALL THINGS

BY

H. ANTHONY

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# THE MOST FOOLISH OF ALL THINGS

# THE MOST FOOLISH OF ALL THINGS

## THE MOST FOOLISH OF ALL THINGS

ONCE upon a time a great ruler caused to be sought out the wisest man in all the world to come and instruct his subjects. The sage was very old, and his beard swept the ground as he sat in the chair of honor. He had visited every country, travelling both by sea and by land, and had conversed with multitudes of men and women, and read all books.

"And what will be the first lesson that thou wilt teach, O sage?" asked the ruler.

"I know not if I am right," replied the wise man, "but it seems to me best to teach thy subjects first what is the most foolish of all things, so that they may know and avoid it."

And the ruler said, "So be it."

Then the ruler caused many of his subjects to assemble in the courtyard of his palace before the sage. And to them the wise man propounded the question, "What is the most foolish of all things?"

First there rose up the prime minister and answered, "The most foolish of all things is to tell the truth to one's enemies."

But the sage shook his head in negation.

Then arose a brilliant and beautifully attired

court-lady. She said, "O sage, the most foolish of all things is the horrid idea that all men are equal."

"Nay, great madam, thou hast not truly spoken," replied the sage.

The next to answer was a priest of high degree and great power, and he spoke as one thereto accustomed. "The most foolish of all things is to doubt and rebel against the teachings of our most holy church. Hell awaits all schismatics and heretics. And here on earth they should be — "

But the sage stopped him, lest he preach a sermon. "Nay, most august bishop, thou art mistaken."

Then a very rich man stood up. "O sage," he said, "the most foolish of all things is to neglect to lay up treasure against the evil days of old age."

"Nay, not the most foolish," answered the sage.

Next a famous teacher, the head of a great university, took the word. "I know," said he, "that the most foolish of all things is to expect wisdom from the unlettered."

"Nay, not that," replied the wise old man.

But then the ruler himself became impatient and somewhat angry. So he demanded with petulance, "What, then, is the most foolish of all things? Let's have it and be done with it."

"O ruler," answered the sage, "the most foolish of all things is also the most common, and it is scorn, scorn for one's human fellows."

But with one voice they rejected the sage's teachings, and straightway drove him from the chair of honor.

## THE THREE VISITORS

A POOR poet sat in his garret and wove into melody the words and dreams that God gave him. And as he sat, there came a knock on his door. He rose and gave entrance to his visitor.

"I am Riches," said his guest, "and I have come to give you a sight of me. Do you not see that I am desirable? Yet you have not sought me out."

"I have seen you in my dreams," replied the poet, "and then there was, as now, blood on your hands."

"Oh, your vision is warped," said the visitor, "there is no blood on my hands, those are but rubies of great price. I have murdered no one."

"Yet, I see millions whom you have murdered," said the poet, "and there are lies in your mouth. You promise happiness, and you can not give it. I fain would be courteous, but I must ask you to leave me."

And Riches departed in great anger, never more to visit the poet.

But hardly was the poet seated again when he must rise to admit another stranger.

"I am Fame," said this visitor, "and I come to abide with you forever."

"Ah, but I think I know the price I must pay for your company," said the poet.

"And what, pray, think you?" asked Fame.

"I must pay in envy from my friends and lying

scandal from my enemies. And ever will you be on tiptoe to take flight from me," said the poet.

"You have spoken truly," Fame replied, "but am I not worth that price?"

"Nay, verily," said the poet, "one friend doth outweigh all that Fame can give, and peace of mind is above any price."

"Adieu, then," said Fame, "I shall not come again."

And soon thereafter came a third visitor, and called to the poet to open. And, behold, she was a being of great comeliness, and radiant.

"I know you," said the poet, when his eyes fell on her, and I know your sisters. They are Truth and Beauty. Oh, will you deign to visit me?"

"I have come to dwell with you, if you will have me," said the radiant guest.

"Oh, happy, happy me!" cried the poet. "What can I have done to deserve so great happiness, poor, humble me!"

"You have sung nobly and truly, and that is enough to deserve me."

And the poet rejoiced beyond measure, because Love had come to him.

# THE SECRET OF BEAUTY

ONCE upon a time there was a poet who dreamed much on the secret of beauty, and wondered what it was and wherein it lay. He looked at the sunset, and it was beautiful, the flowers by the roadside, and they were beautiful, as were the songs of women, and flashing gems, and the eyes of children, and poems, and pictures. He loved them all. But what was it that all had in common? Was it in sound or form or color, and in that only? Or was it because he loved them?

And, behold, he saw coming a fond pair of lovers. And he said, "Love goes with beauty."

But the pair drew still nearer, and he saw they were burned by the sun and thin from toil or privation. Oh, care had slept with them, and they were graven by pain and by sorrow. And yet beauty was in them.

Rapt in thought, he sat musing, and lo! on his motionless hand there settled a moth all damasked with colors. "And why is it damasked with colors? — For its day of love? — Is that why it is damasked with colors?"

So thinking, his glance fell on the ground at his feet, and there in writhing embrace lay two naked worms. "Do they love? Oh, could they love like that moth that is damasked with colors? Those two naked worms, slimy, disgusting? Does love go with beauty?"

He lifted his eyes. There floated above him

great galleons of clouds wafted by soft evening breezes across the expanse of the heavens. And the flames of the sunset flared on their canvas. "Beauty is there, but no love. Love goes not with beauty. Clouds can love nothing. Yet I love them, they are radiant with beauty. But not the dull ox, which yonder is plodding — he feels no love for the clouds, but likewise he sees not their beauty — or does he? Perhaps to one naked worm another even so naked and slimy is radiant with beauty. Or perhaps a moth, however damasked with colors, hath no beauty for the moth mating with it. Who knows?

"I see some beauty, perhaps more than my neighbor. But he, he sees a beauty in his ugly squat wife. Well, let him. I thank God that he does. But I am blind to it. Do I thank God that I am? Should I thank God for a blindness? — I don't know.— But there must be a beauty in all things for the eye that can see it or the soul that can feel it, or what was God about when he made them?

"You know, I believe that beauty makes love wake up.— That sounds good, but it is shallow, for there are the worms and my neighbor's wife.

"Oh, the likelihood is that love has nothing to do with beauty, and beauty nothing to do with love. Where there is sex, there may be only lust — and lust is ugly — the naked worm again, slimy and disgusting. But that thought too is ugly, and I know it is not true. Certainly every other sort of love except sexual love is beautiful — say a patriot's love, or a saint's, or a martyr's, or a mother's.

"You know, I am going home to pray a while."

## SURRENDER

ONCE an old man walked on the highway, and thought of the days of his youth, for the highway led to the place of his humble beginnings. And though his body was too old and too feeble to traverse the distance, his mind ran on ahead till it reached the end of the road, where lay the old farmstead in ruins. And the mind busied itself with fond recollections. It dwelt there a while recalling father and mother, brothers and sisters, and for a moment was cheered, but, then, saddened, it returned to the old man shuffling and stumbling along the highway.

And as it entered again into the old feeble body, the bald old doddering head, it said to itself, "I am tired of this tenement. It is quite worn out. It is a burden that I no longer will carry. It is the shell of a tortoise. I will leave it, leave it forever, and go seek the abode of my early companions, find where they have gone and embrace them, drink in with my eyes their glances of love, and on my lips receive their fond kisses."

But the body found a voice for itself and replied, "No, no, don't leave me. I shall rot here without you."

"What can I do?" answered the mind. "You are worn out and quite useless."

"But listen," said the body, "you will need my arms to embrace with, my eyes to drink in glances of love, my lips to receive any fond kisses. What

will you do without them? Ha, you don't know. And that's your sole business — to know. You are the feeble thing. You can do nothing without me. You never have done anything without me. You would have been deaf, dumb, and blind, as unfeeling as a stone, without me. And such may be your condition after you leave me. Who knows? — You don't, that is plain."

"Oh, but I believe I shall be free to come and go, and take joy without hindrance."

"You believe, yes, you believe, but how often, I ask you how often, have you been mistaken? How many beliefs that you have cherished have proved vain and futile? Ah, it is better that you should stay with me — safer, more certain. Oh, it is far better."

And the mind was bewildered, filled with doubt. It might be that death was also for it, or something far worse than death would be for the body. Oh, it might be that the voice of the body was true. Who could say? Who could tell?

So the mind clung to the body, the coward mind clung to the old, useless, wornout body.

## THE HOME OF THE GRACES

ONCE Faith, Love, and Hope set out to find a human heart in which they could dwell. And they chose first a young woman. She became so attractive that she had suitors innumerable, and she married the richest. But then Vanity entered her heart and waxed so great that it pressed out Faith, Love, and Hope, leaving no room for them to live, much less to act. And Faith, Love, and Hope in human hearts must ever be acting, or they will die.

So the Three fled before death, and crept for shelter into the heart of a man who wrote poems. And straight his songs found their way to the souls of his neighbors. And all of the people vied with each other in heaping praises upon him. Once more their old enemy intruded itself into the dwelling place of Faith, Love, and Hope. Vanity came into the heart of the poet, and again the graces departed to seek some other lodging.

So Hope said, "Where shall we go?"

And Faith said, "Yes, indeed, whither? Humanity we can not forsake, or its plight will be pitiable."

"And wherever we go," said Love, "Vanity comes to destroy us, and grows and grows until there is no room left us."

"Yes," said Hope, "I think we must hide in a place that Vanity can not find, or finding, would starve for lack of a welcome."

"But," said Love, "it must not be a place where we shall be quite hidden — not that."

"No," said Faith, "not that."

"Ah," said Love, "I have it. Come with me."

And Love took the hands of Faith and of Hope, and led them to the heart of a woman who was the mother of sons and of daughters. They nestled close in the heart of this woman.

"But will any one see us here?" asked Faith.

"Yes, they will see us," Love answered.

"Who will see us?" asked Hope.

"The sons and the daughters, they will see us," said Love. "They know they have but to look into the heart of their mother to find the permanent place of our dwelling."

"And Vanity, will it intrude?" asked Faith.

"No, it will not intrude," said Love, "for her pride is centered not in herself, but in her sons and her daughters."

So Love and Faith and Hope thanked their Creator for the refuge they found in the heart of a mother, and abode there forever.

## WHEN POVERTY COMES IN AT THE DOOR

LOVE lived in a cottage. There were honeysuckles and roses all around and about the cottage, and Love looked on them through muslin curtains, diaphanous and shimmering. Love was happy and crooned all the day long, humming the old sweet songs, and rejoicing in their fruition.

The pansies in the yard looked up in the early spring time, and smiled in Love's face. And daisies, verbenas, and phlox, and petunias came in their season. And Love looked on them all, and was more happy than ever.

The spring bloomed and passed, and then the hot summer glowed, but scorched not Love's happiness. For there were the dahlias and lilies, and the daisies still lingered. And Love grew stronger and ripened, and joyed in the heat of the summer. Life seemed a dream from a beauteous Italian garden or a perfume from an oasis of Araby.

Then came the autumn, and brought with it golden-rod, chrysanthemums, tube-roses, a wealth and riot of sweetness and color. And Love smiled with content in the hazy Indian summer, and dimpled with pleasure in the plenteous abundance of October. No shadow of sorrow, no hint of privation dimmed even the surface of Love's gladness.

But alas! with the winter came frost, ice, sleet, and a great coldness. All of the flowers in Love's garden were frozen. Their bare, empty stalks were

blown here and yonder by the cruel winds from drear northern regions. The fruitful earth was locked up, and all of its brightness and plenty had vanished. And there came into Love's cottage a miserable stranger, cold and forbidding, merciless, unfeeling.

This horrible stranger thrust his fell visage into Love's cottage, stalked in to take possession as if he were the owner. Love looked at him aghast, shrank back, then knew him.

"Oh," said Love, "I can not dwell with him. Oh, he will kill me. He is so cruel. I know I can not dwell with him!"

And Love, shrieking, fled — abandoned the cottage, went out into the merciless winter. And died, was frozen on the graves of the flowers.

And next year in the desert of the garden there was no perfume or color, but only a whispering sound like the sibilant hissing of serpents.

## WHICH?

ONCE upon a time there was a man who had suffered many misfortunes, but nevertheless was serene, seeming to have an inward source of content. He had been wealthy, but had lost most of his money, and, by consequence, most of his friends. He had been falsely accused to the great detriment of his reputation. And his health, from being robust, had become frail and uncertain.

The man's serenity became a matter of common speculation and gossip in the whole neighborhood. Some said that he was too lazy and indifferent to worry. Others that he was so hardened as to be insensible to ordinary afflictions. Others that he was too proud to show his suffering. And still others that he must be very religious, and in that find his comfort.

At length, a busybody, overcome with curiosity, went to see him, and inquired of him, "Are you very religious?"

"No, not specially," said the man.

"Well, are you too proud to show any suffering?"

"No," said the man, "I do not think I am proud. I believe myself humble, although none of us can be sure that pride has been quite cast from his heart."

"Perhaps you have had so many troubles that you have become insensible to ordinary afflictions?" said the busybody.

"Oh, no, I haven't," said the man, "I feel keenly the loss of money, friends, and reputation. Who wouldn't?"

"Oh, well," said the busybody, "you must be just lazy and indifferent."

But at last the man, becoming indignant at this catechism, said, "Why do you come putting so many questions? By what right do you subject me to annoying impertinence?"

"The whole community has been talking about you," said the busybody, "and has been wondering why you seem so serene, so undisturbed by your flood of misfortune."

"Indeed!" said the man, "Indeed!" tempted at first not to give any relevant answer. But reflecting that the feeling was petty, he said, "Doubtless, others may have better reasons for whatever serenity they muster, whatever tranquillity under misfortune. At times, indeed, I think mine is the poorest of all reasons, but, thank God, it suffices."

The busybody fidgeted about, "What is it? What is it?" he asked with impatience.

"It simply is this," said the man, "I know there is a cure for all earthly ills, and when I choose I have the courage to take it. But as yet there are still those who love me."

"Tell me that cure. Tell it me quickly," said the busybody.

"I will," said the man, "it is Death."

But a lone old man, the oldest among all of the neighbors, when he heard the man's saying, declared, "The man is mistaken. His cure really is, that as yet there are still those who love him."

## THE WANDERER

ONCE upon a time there was a man of an honest spirit who dwelt in a country whereof all of the people worshiped a god. But the man of an honest spirit would not worship him. He did not inveigh against this god nor against the worshipers. But he withheld himself and would not bow down. So the people of the country began to look upon him as peculiar and stubborn, and they regarded him askance, as if he were evil.

But among these people were some who were kindly disposed, and they came to the man of an honest spirit, and pleaded with him, saying, "Come, bow down. You are growing very unpopular, and your business is suffering. Soon you will be poor, perhaps a bankrupt, unless you worship our god. You must do as others in this community, if you wish to get on. You may pretend to worship any god you please, so long as you give your real allegiance to our god. All of us pretend to worship quite another god, as you know, and we are polite to each other about that pretence, and get on and thrive.

"We hate to see you suffer. We know you mean well, and we like you. But give up your foolish attitude of aloofness. There is but one real god who will feed you and clothe you. You should be sensible enough to know that. Come, be practical."

But the man of an honest spirit said, "I am sorry, but for me it is impossible. I can not wor-

ship your god, I don't believe in him. And one reason is that you will not publicly profess to worship him. You come to me confidentially as friends — and I am grateful — to help me, and you acknowledge that you pretend to worship quite another god. For some reason you can not, or will not, publicly profess your allegiance to your real god. Therefore I think he must be evil."

"Oh, well," said they, "it is an open secret. Everybody knows it. It isn't as if we were really deceiving anybody. Why, we should be fools really to serve the god that we profess to serve. We should starve, and quite likely become martyrs. So far as we know, most of those who have really served him, have become martyrs. We have no such ambition."

"Well," said the man of an honest spirit, "why wouldn't it do for me actually to serve your real god and publicly profess to serve him and him only? I could think of myself as doing that."

"No, no," said they, "that wouldn't do. You would be condemned. People wouldn't stand for that. You see, you've got to be like other people. And the proper thing is to say that you are worshiping a god who enjoins love and unselfishness as the main things. You don't have to do anything but say that. Nobody expects you to act that way, but you do have to say it. You can't be so simple as not to understand that."

"I understand it," said the man of an honest spirit, "but my conscience hurts me when I say I serve one god and really serve another."

"Oh, bosh!" said they, "you are talking about your conscience. Does our conscience bother us?

— Not at all. The trouble with you is that you think you are better than anybody else. We are not asking you to do anything except what everybody else does. And, frankly, we don't care whether you do it or not. We came to you merely out of kindness, and we are done. Take our advice or leave it. It's nothing to us."

They departed in anger.

And the man of an honest spirit, perplexed, said to himself, " It is odd that I must pretend to serve God and really serve Mammon. Perhaps I had better move to some other country."

## THE GREAT WRITER

ONCE there was a man who had a good business and prospered well in the affairs of the world. But he was not content. He wished to be a great writer. It was his constant prayer to become a great writer. His mind was full of roseate pictures of glory and joy in the love of his fellows that fame would bring him when he should become a great writer.

In the course of time it happened that his business failed, because he no longer gave it undivided attention. And the people who before had esteemed him, looked down on him now as a failure, and thought him a fool to sacrifice a good business to an uncertain ambition. And his wife became tired of the poverty that followed, and complaining of his lack of devotion, left him and found a more prosperous husband.

Creditors dogged at his heels and accused him, saying that he was a thief and a swindler, because he had bought without paying, and could not pay when they dunned him.

His business was gone and his wife and most of his friends, for he was unable to return his friends' favors. And on top of all this, the publishers scorned him, because he was new and his writings were different. Still he wrote and wrote despite his privations. He was indeed trying to become a great writer.

At last when despair was already clutching his

throat and it seemed that all of his dreams were doomed to unending disaster, there was found a publisher who ventured to publish some part of his writings. For years they were coldly received, but then the public woke up, and acclaimed him a master. He was old and tired and deserted and lonely. And the thrill of joy that he felt was as weak as a moonbeam compared with the brilliant sun of his anticipation. He had merely the feeling that perhaps after all his life had not been wholly a failure.

Posterity mentions his name with true reverence, saying he was indeed a great writer, but, sighing lightly, remarks that he had some sort of financial trouble and was not quite happy in his domestic relations. And young writers of our later times look back and envy the glory of the poor, old, broken, lonely man, never realizing the price of that glory.

Oh, but indeed that glory is the endless tribute of hearts that he comforts. And the price that he paid — who shall say it was out of proportion?

## PARADOX

ONCE upon a time was a wife who discovered that her husband was unfaithful, but she loved him, so she didn't know what to do. Should she reproach him? No, she might lose him. Should she tell him she knew and still not reproach him? No, she might lose him. Oh, she didn't want to lose him!

Should she show herself to him more loving than ever, more affectionate, more passionate, more hungry for love? — She tried it. But the thought of the other woman! Oh, the thought of the other woman! It was bitter. It was gall in her husband's kisses. On his lips was the wormwood of the other woman.

Should she withhold herself, be cold and indifferent? — She tried it. And more than ever her husband was absent from home and fireside. More than ever he frequented the abode of his mistress. And more than ever she hated to lose him. Bitterer than ever the thought of caresses, the besmirching caresses of the wanton woman showered on her husband, on her own husband. Ugh! The slime of them!

Should she kill the woman? Should she slay the viper that had crept into her nest, her nest in the heart of her husband? Should she? Should she? Oh, how she wished she could. But she couldn't. Oh, no, she could not kill. She was too gentle for that. She could not kill even a nauseous viper

coiled in the heart of her husband. And she might lose him. And she loved him. Oh, she didn't want to lose him!

Should she win for herself some lover, or appear to, and get back her husband through jealousy? She tried it. But no, it wouldn't do. She loved her husband. The very hands of her lover were repulsive to her. She hated his touch. His skin shone with cleanness, but she couldn't bear his touch. She felt it defile her. So she sent him away.

But it was not right, it was not fair that she should go on loving her husband. She would strangle that love. She tried it. No, no. She could not strangle that. What would be left to her? That love had been the world to her. She could not strangle that. Her past happiness had been given by that love. But her future happiness — where would that come from? She must look to her future happiness.

It broke upon her like a dawn that her future happiness must come from that love. Not from the love of her husband for her, but from her love for her husband. That was to remain her treasure. Oh, that, at least, she could hug to her bosom. That was imperishable.

And what happened? — Oh, she was irradiated, made transcendent, luminous. And her husband, seeing, knelt before the holy mystery, entreating forgiveness.

## THE WHINER

BEHOLD, there was a certain man who bewailed his lot and complained to God continually because of his troubles and many distresses, saying, "I have such bad fortune, everything goes wrong with me. I am not as other men. They all have their blessings, while I am the butt of every disaster."

And God was wearied with his whining, so sent down an angel with fullest instructions to offer the man interchange of identity with some one more fortunate.

And the angel, coming down, said, "God sends me here to swap you into the body of the richest man that you know, and if you choose, you may be he, have what he has, and enjoy it, and he must be you to bear your afflictions."

"What!" said the man, "me be that old man! No, thank you. He's all twisted up with rheumatism. I don't want to be him."

"Well," said the angel, "you may be the social leader in your community. He is young, well-to-do, and has the prettiest wife in the city."

"No," said the man, "I wouldn't be him. He is foolish, and his wife is very extravagant. I don't want to be him."

"Perhaps you would like to be the governor of the state. He is generally admired and respected."

"No," said the man, "he has too many responsibilities and too many enemies. I don't want to be him."

"All right," said the angel, "my instructions are to allow you three days to consider and decide who you would be. At the end of that time, I will come to hear your decision and fulfil it."

For two days and nights the man earnestly canvassed in his mind the lot, character, and circumstance of every acquaintance that he had in the city.

On the morning of the third day he was filled with contrition, and prayed humbly to God, saying, "O God, the fault is in me. I have been a whiner. I would not swap places with any of my fellows. They all have their faults or their troubles, which I dislike more than mine own. Forgive me. My faults I will amend, my troubles I will overcome or endure as I can. Forgive me."

In such wise have many people been moved to contrition. And there is no telling but the angel will come to you or to me. Perhaps we dream our choice would be different. But by taking thought we may save the angel some trouble.

## THE STONE MASON

THIS is the story of a stone mason who was hired to work on a church, and he was lazy and faithless. He said to himself, "The building committee will hardly take time to inspect very closely the work that I do, for the church is not the property of any of them."

So he laid the stones in their courses but loosely, and plumbed them so carelessly that the walls were ready to totter before they were finished. And as he had foreseen, the building committee were in a great hurry, each man to return to his business that might afford him a profit. And they did not detect the slackness of the stone mason's work.

And it happened not so very long afterward that the debt on the church, incurred for its building, was discharged by full payment. So a bishop was sent for to dedicate the house to the worship of God. And the people felt proud of themselves, taking much credit that they had built so handsome a temple.

The bishop was an eloquent man, and he tickled the pride of the people as in the course of his prayer he told God Almighty what a wonderful folk they were. How good and how pious and self-sacrificing to have spent so much of their money in constructing an edifice for worship, when they might have spent all of this money on personal adornment or some other folly.

But it happened that while he was praying, the

walls came down with a crash and killed some of the people and maimed many others. And the mason had come to the service to hear himself praised as the builder of the beautiful temple of God. He was crushed to death in the ruins.

The surviving members of the church said it served the mason right, and was a judgment of God visited upon him. There was another denomination in the same town, and they said it was a judgment of God visited upon that whole church for its heretical teaching. But those opposed to all churches held that it was a judgment of God visited upon the members for ungodly pride in the building and hypocrisy in general. The bishop said, " Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

And the building committee, for obvious reasons, agreed with the bishop, but with a mental reservation in regard to the mason, on whom they laid all of the blame, not even believing that God loved him.

## FAILURE

THERE was a certain man of family who inherited a fortune, and thereafter in all business transactions he was lenient and generous. From time to time he sold his lands on easy terms, and rented out his houses at a low price. And he forbore to collect his revenues when it seemed that collection would work a hardship on his debtors. All of his debtors praised him and called him a good fellow, and they spread the word around that no man was compelled to pay him.

Oft times the tenants who lived in his houses would come to him with such tales of sorrow that he would remit their rent and lend them his moneys to relieve their troubles. And the crops of those who had bought his land were always bad, and they could not pay interest without depriving their families of food and clothing. It seemed to him that all the woes of the world piled up on the heads of any who came into his debt, and he was sorry for them.

So it went on until at last he must seek out the bankers and borrow from them, for his own family at home had begun to suffer for lack of ordinary comforts. He was an upright man, and known to have a large inheritance, so the bankers loaned to him readily. But when their interest fell due, they insisted on payment, and the man had not the heart to proceed against his own debtors, so he borrowed from usurers to pay the bankers their

interest. And soon the usurers came snarling at his heels, like wolves, for their usury. And now claims for both interest and principal were showered thick on the unhappy man, and he was ashamed to go home to his family, for his wife would ask him what had become of his inheritance, and he felt that the hearts of his children were full of reproaches.

He went to the lawyers, who persuaded him to hire them to sue all his debtors. So he sued them, but alas his very leniency was pleaded against him, for in many cases the time had elapsed, so that he could recover but little, and moreover he made enemies of all those who had owed him. His dearest wish had been to be regarded as kind of heart, and now many people hated him. All that he recovered had to be paid to the lawyers, so he got nothing by this litigation.

Bankers and usurers joined forces and swooped down upon him, and took from him all of his pledges. Even then their demands were not paid in full, so they called him a swindler and scoundrel, and respectable people avoided him.

Such was the way that the man told his story, but it was not quite true, though he was unaware of its falsity. It was not kindness of heart, but vanity that ruined him. Too dearly he loved to be praised, and so lost all his substance in grasping a shadow.

## THE ANGEL OF GOOD GIFTS

THE angel of good gifts came to earth and stood on a street corner, meaning to stop passers-by, and bestow on them a benefit.

It happened that the first person who came was a banker. "What wouldst thou have," the angel asked, "to increase thy happiness?"

And the banker replied, "If only I had another million, I should be content."

As they stood talking, a beggar shuffled by, and the angel inquired of him what he wished above all things.

The beggar said, "I would choose a thousand dollars, then I should be happy."

A housewife was passing with a basket on her arm. The angel stopped her, and said, "Name what thou most desirest, and thou shalt have it."

And the housewife answered, "Oh, if my husband's salary were doubled, all of my cares would vanish, and I should be so happy."

Next came a little child crying. The angel caught it up in his arms, and asked, "Why dost thou weep? What wouldst thou have?"

And the child said amid sobs, "I want a penny, and Papa wouldn't give it to me."

Then trudged by a working-man with a scowl on his face, and to the angel's query replied, "My wages are too low. We are striking for an increase of twenty per cent."

"And that would satisfy thee?"

"Yes, I shall be happy if we get it."

A poet, a reformer, a preacher, a lawyer, a harlot — all wanted more money. For God had decreed that every soul questioned must speak truth to the angel.

The angel granted the wish of them all, and overjoyed flew back to Heaven. It had been so simple and easy. All wanted the same thing, whereas the angel had feared that such a variety of gifts would be desired as to tax his powers.

Radiant he came to the throne, "Oh, Father," he said, "I have made so many people happy."

And God answered, "Foolish, foolish angel, hereafter thou shalt stay in Heaven."

And God sent the angel of sacrifice to abide with men and lead them along the road to happiness. But him will they not follow. They cry out incessantly for the return of the angel of good gifts.

## ILLUSION

ONCE upon a time two pure-minded and innocent lovers sat with hands clasped each in the other's, talking of the future. Their thoughts were very happy and their hopes very bright. For each believed that in the other was perfection embodied. And neither could quell the wonder that either was thought worthy by the other to wed such perfection. And in their minds was the picture of the home to be — not a grand home, but a sweet one, with flowers around it, and musical with the voices of children engendered by their love.

Oh, they were happy! Spirits of the redeemed looked down from the ramparts of Heaven and rejoiced, because in the lovers they saw a happiness equal to their own except in duration. And those spirits hoped even that so great a love might survive the limits of human mortality and persist in the ageless hereafter. They knew, they must have known, that such was impossible. But the loveliness of love cloyed their discernment — a discernment supernal, far above that of humans.

And the thoughts of the lovers ran far to the future. Through shining years, through joyous strength, but they recked not of age or decadence. For he said, "We shall love forever and ever."

And she echoed, "Forever! Nothing shall conquer our love, but it will grow stronger and stronger."

And hands tightened their pressure, as lips met

in the fondest of kisses, and sighs of sweet rapture slipped from hearts ravished with passion. And instant, immediate was the call of that passion, for they were young. Oh, joy! they were young.

Panting, he whispered, "My angel."

And she throbbingly answered, "My darling! Press me close. Fill me, oh, fill me with love's dear ecstasy. I burn for thee."

"And I for thee!"

Oh, was this in the long ago? Hush! it is timeless, fleeting. It comes and goes — and returns, ever seeming to end, but yet never ending. If it were yesterday, it will be deathless. If a thousand years agone, it will be deathless. If tomorrow, it will never die. Oh, it will live in the memory, in the hopes, of men and of women. It is the joy of joys. It is radiant life in full zenith.

Ah, thou cold anchorite, pity that thou must have missed it! Ah, thou beaded nun, feel in thy every bead a plashy tear. And vestals of all other creeds, weep — but pray your gods for sweet imagining.

## A RIDDLE

ONCE upon a time a poor man overtook a ragged woman on the highway. She was carrying a bundle closely wrapped. With the freemasonry of the poor he accosted her and trudged along by her side.

At length he asked her, "What have you in that bundle that you carry so carefully?"

"A baby," she answered, "my baby."

"How old is it?"

"It is six weeks old, and it is the best little thing you ever saw."

"Where is its father?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him for a long time."

"Well, where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know!"

"No, I don't know. I am just going away from somewhere, not to any place."

And tears ran down her face that he saw now was swollen from weeping.

"Why are you going away?'

"They told me to go away. They said I couldn't stay there any longer."

"Where were you?"

"Oh, I was in jail back yonder," she motioned with the thumb of her free hand over her shoulder.

"And they told you you couldn't stay in jail?"

"Yes, you see, I was sentenced for vagrancy. And then the baby came, and they let me stay past

the time of the sentence, they said, and they couldn't let me stay any longer."

"Wouldn't they let you work around the place for your keep?"

"No, they wouldn't do that; I asked them. But they said they couldn't do that. They told me not to stay around there. They said for me to go away."

"Aren't you willing to work?"

"Yes, I am willing to work."

"You look strong enough."

"I am strong, quite strong, and I asked to work, but they wouldn't let me. They just kept on saying for me to go away, so I am going."

"Well, who is your baby's father?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know!"

"No, I don't really know."

"Oh, I see, you haven't been a good woman, and that was the reason they wouldn't let you stay."

"No, I haven't been a very good woman, but I told them I wanted to be a good woman and that I would be a good woman. They wouldn't believe me. They said they had seen my kind before, and they told me to go on away."

"So you are going, and that's all there is to it?"

"Yes, that's all there is to it," said the woman, "unless," she looked at him meaningly, "unless — "

"No, no," said the man, "you don't foist yourself and your baby on me. Here is a dollar, and it is pretty nearly my last one, but take it and buy something to eat."

He handed her the money, and quickened his steps so as to leave her behind him.

She sat down on the roadside and cried a while, for she was tired and hungry. Then she suckled the baby. Then the thought of the food that the dollar would buy in the next town took possession of her. So she rose and hurried on.

What do you suppose ever did become of her and her baby?

## A PROBLEM

THERE was a great hubbub and outcry in the midst of the city. A man accused of the crime of rape had been apprehended.

"Bring him out! Bring him out!" cried the crowd, "Hang him! Hang him!"

He was brought forth. There he stood, gross body, bull neck, wide jaws, big chin, sensual lips, fleshy nose, pig eyes, back-slanting forehead. There he stood. Oh, he was a human brute!

At the sight of him the anger of the crowd waxed stronger than ever. Louder than ever were the cries of, "Hang him! Hang him!"

And loudest of all shrieked a pale, anæmic man, who stood in the forefront. There he stood, slender body, slight neck, narrow jaws, small chin, thin lips, aquiline nose, poet eyes, bulging forehead. There he stood. And his piping voice shrilled loudest of all, "Hang him! Hang him!" for to him the crime was unspeakably horrible.

His piercing cry rose so high above all others that all eyes were fastened on his delicate face, and there was almost a lull but for him. It was as if he were elected general accuser to voice the wrath of his fellows. And the sense of it thrilled his nerves, lashed his overstrung nerves to a climax of fury, so that his cries became quite incoherent.

Stolid, dull, unmoving, save for a slight twitch of his muscles, stood the accused. Not even a shifting glance seeking a way to escape, for it would have been hopeless.

"Burn him! Burn him!" the straining crowd caught from the hoarse voice of the accuser reduced to a whisper. And the cry was taken up on all sides, "Burn him! Burn him!"

It was as if an oracle had spoken. And it was an oracle that never had felt, that never could feel, the mighty surge of lust that had swept through the veins of its victim and met there no inhibition.

Yes, the crowd burned the accused, whom some power had made with gross body, bull neck, wide jaws, big chin, sensual lips, fleshy nose, pig eyes, and back-slanting forehead — a brute in human form.

Where think you lay the greatest guilt?

## GOOD COUNSEL

AND behold! there was a certain preacher who came to preach in a city. As he looked on all sides about him, he saw nothing but sin. So he rose in the pulpit and denounced all of the people, and said they were the disciples of hell. And they paid little attention. They came in throngs, it is true, to hear what he said, but their conduct they changed not. Day in and day out they continued their sinning.

And the preacher grew frantic. He cursed with all holy curses in the name of Jehovah the unregenerate people. And his fury waxed and grew ever greater. And he warned all the people that some great disaster would fall on their city if they changed not their ways and walked not in the paths that he pointed out. But they paid little attention, though throngs came out to hear him. They sat still and heard him, and then went on with their sinning.

And disaster came not to the city. It basked in the sun, harmed neither by fire, earthquake, nor tempest. And the people as usual engaged in their business. They ate and drank and were merry. They wept and died and were buried. They married and gave their daughters in marriage. They brought up their children, supported their families, and worked for a living. They went to church and theater. They danced, they said their prayers, fooled along, and flirted.

And the preacher was stirred to still greater anger, so he prayed, "O God in the highest, send down to this people some awful disaster. Let the storm blow or the earth open or fire come and sweep the whole city, so that the people may know that thou art a righteous God, exacting thy vengeance."

But oddly it happened that a fire came and destroyed only the home of the preacher. And some were foolish enough to rejoice and say that God sent it. And the preacher was so cast down in his heart that he sought for wise counsel, and he got it.

There was an old deacon who told him, "You have so long looked for sin that your eyes are blinded to virtue. You have uncontradicted accounted yourself the mouthpiece of God till you are puffed up beyond measure. You would destroy a people that you can not bend to your will, so at heart you are a murderer. And worst of all you have forgot that it is love, and not anger, that melts men's hearts and inclines them to God. Suppose you try forgetting yourself and loving your people. They have many virtues, and deserve all the love you can give them."

But I doubt if that preacher could follow the counsel.

## THE TRAIN OF IGNORANCE

THROUGH the streets of a city that exists in many places at once, but that nevertheless is quite real, there passed a procession. It was a long procession, and awful beyond words to describe it.

At its head was a gross, misshapen, gibbering figure, of enormous proportions, reeling along with unsteady gait, a ponderous monster, grinning. His name was Ignorance. And all they who came after made up his train.

Close in the wake of the monster marched Untimely Death with a leash in his hand, leading behind him his numberless victims. And his countenance was fearsome, so vague was it, and yet so compelling. It had no fiery fierceness, but a cold, impassive malice that froze the beholders. And his victims for the most part were babies, but there were millions of older children, and youths and maidens, and men and women, even to the very aged. And a heart-rending wail went up from these victims.

And next came Disease, the satrap of Death, and his victims followed, all maimed and twisted, distorted, deformed, and disfigured. Slowly they shuffled, hobbled, crawled along. Disease, looking back at them, leered, a slaver trickling from his horrid lips, as if he burned to devour their cancerous bodies. The stench of the throng was past all

enduring. And their groans like a constant thunder were split with flashes of shrieking.

And next came Superstition waving a firebrand and pressed close by her ministers and votaries. Her face was insane. On it flaming fury alternated with cruel cunning. At her right hand marched Intolerance, and on her left Vindictiveness, and behind these a rabble of witches and demons, heathen priests, and devils and torturers and fanatics and ghouls and medicine-men and conjurers. And the eyes of these were fixed on Superstition, and their voices were calling to her, claiming rewards for their service. And for proof they held up in their hands the bleeding hearts of their victims. And the victims followed — wave after wave of mutilated bodies and stunted souls crying for mercy, but ceaselessly attacked by witches and demons and spirits of evil flying above and around them and raging among them.

And next was Tyranny, borne along on a throne by courtiers and spies, and followed by an army of cut-throats and assassins. And Tyranny was decked out in splendor. Gold lace and ribands and purple adorned him and his retainers. But the sceptre of Tyranny was a thigh-bone, and his crown was a skull. And there danced before him a band of Furies casting dead men's bones in his pathway that his ear might be pleased with their crunching. And behind him came crawling his subjects with fear in their eyes, their limbs trembling, and his captives bound with chains, gashed, and all bleeding. And the noise of their lamentations was deafening.

Last in the line came hideous Poverty. And his

slaves that followed were wan and despairing. And Crime rode on his shoulders. And they all slunk along as if ashamed of existence, as if, drawn from slums and dark cellars, they could not bear the light of day on their faces. Dull and dejected and miserable, they made a piteous throng to wring the hearts of onlookers. And like a sweat from their ranks exuded a sound, a million-fold whine of the mendicant.

So through all of the ages hath marched this foul monster. And thousands who watched the procession, have turned idly away, saying, "It is hopeless, naught can be done, it is hopeless."

## THE PEOPLE

THE country was said to be in a bad way. And there was a man who made up his mind that he would find out what ailed it. So he began his search by asking the first person he met on the street.

"Our country," said he, "is in a bad way. There seems to be something fundamentally wrong. What do you think is the matter with it?"

"Think?" answered the person, "I know. The trouble is that the lawyers are not given the power they ought to have. Here are men trained in the law, men who have devoted their lives to the study of government in all of its phases, and how are they treated? Their advice is scorned, their opinion is set at naught, and they are made a target for abuse and recrimination. Farmers and merchants and preachers govern this country. What could you expect? They don't know anything about laws, and they muss everything up till it is disgusting."

"I take it that you are a lawyer," said the man.

"Yes, I am, but—"

The man waited to hear no more, but walked on. He had not gone far when he met another person, who looked rather important and knowing, so the man stopped, and to this person propounded the same query.

"Ah, yes," said the person, "our country is in a deplorable condition, and the source of the

trouble is the general neglect of the teaching of the church and the lack of respect for her ministers. Lawyers, many of whom are infidels, govern the country to the detriment of religion. Why, the laws allow all kinds of shows to remain open on the holy Sabbath, trains to be run, newspapers to be printed, and all sorts of secular business to be carried on. What could you expect? The ministers of the gospel are scorned and ridiculed, and have no power to enforce the decrees of God. No wonder the country is headed straight for destruction."

"I take it," said the man, "that you are a preacher."

"Yes, I am, but —"

The man waited to hear no more, but walked on till he met a person who looked rural, and to this person he put the same question.

"Yes," he was answered, "the country is in a bad fix, and I don't see any way out of it. And why? — Because the farmers are the backbone of the country and the salt of the earth, and nobody gives them a show. That's why. Rascally lawyers make the laws, and they make them for their own advantage, so that the farmers have to pay for everything. And the merchants cheat the farmers all of the time, and the preachers are always taking up collections. The farmers have to support everybody, and don't have any say about anything in this country, and everybody makes fun of them. It is easy enough to see what ails this country."

"I take it," said the man, "that you are a farmer."

"Yes, I am, but—"

The man waited to hear no more, but walked on till he met a person very dapper and brisk in his movements, and of this person he asked the same question.

And this was the answer, "Oh, well, the business man has no chance. Every merchant is hampered and pestered by a multiplicity of fool laws made by lawyers and farmers and preachers, till it is almost impossible to carry on business. What this country needs is a business administration, but I don't think it ever will get it. There are too many demagogue lawyers and fool farmers and bigoted preachers. Oh, no, a man in business is the last to get any consideration."

"I take it," said the man, "that you are a merchant."

"Yes, I am, but—"

The man waited to hear no more, but walked on. He had found what it was that ailed the country.

## MISTS

A HERMIT dreaming on a mountain side of men and things soliloquized: —

"In the valley below is a mist, and through it stretches a highway. I sit here and peer at my fellow mortals. Not a one of them can I see clearly. Nebulous and shadowy are their faces, and their motions are made to me to seem grotesque.

"In places and at times the mist thins itself or is thinned, is so attenuated that almost I fancy I can see some passenger as he is. For one brief moment his lineaments emerge lit up by the light above him and me. But the next instant is he again enveloped, and I have only the memory of the gleam. If I could, I would dissipate the ever changing fog. I would blow upon it with mighty lungs, and drive it from the valley. But to me that is impossible.

"Or if I could, I would so strengthen the power of my eye that its gaze would penetrate the mist like light through the clear ether. Oh, I would love to see my fellows as they are. I would love to read on their faces the motions of their hearts. I would love to sympathize with their every feeling. But how can I when I can not see? To me they are like flitting ghosts in veils enshrouded."

There came to the hermit an angel, whispering, "O man of holiness, descend into the valley."

"Nay, my home is on the mountain side, where

I can breathe the pure air of heaven. I should suffocate in the valley."

But the angel was urgent, and would not be withstood, " Nay, go thou into the valley."

So the hermit, gathering his gown about him, began the descent. And as he proceeded, the mist grew ever thinner. And lo! when he reached the highway on which toiled his fellow mortals, all was clear sunlight, the bright whitness of a summer day. And the passengers along the highway were no longer shadowy or nebulous, but every man of them appeared in his proper color. And on his face was written his joy or his sorrow.

And the hermit, looking back up the mountain side, saw that he had been sitting in a cloud.

## THE SUBTLE MAN

ONCE there was a very subtle man who wished to win other people to carry out his purposes. And he met a wine-bibber, who drank more than any of his neighbors. And the subtle man praised the wine-bibber, saying, "Lo, you can drink more than any other man I ever saw. You can drink as much as you please, and it never does hurt you. You have a special power. You are an exceptional man."

And he met a libertine who had ruined a great many women. And the subtle man praised the libertine, saying, "You have a way with the women. They can not resist you. You have a special power. You are an exceptional man."

And he met a miser who had amassed vast hoards of money, so that his vaults were crammed full to their bursting. And the subtle man praised the miser, saying, "You are the richest man in the country. You can outwit all who scheme against you. You are too shrewd for them all. You have a special power. You are an exceptional man."

And he met an evangelist who had won converts until they were like mullet for numbers. And the subtle man praised the evangelist, saying, "You are the greatest preacher of the age. No sinner can harden his heart against your appeals to his conscience. You have a special power. You are an exceptional man."

And he met a waiter in a restaurant who could

bring in a multitude of dishes at one time. He heaped them up in pyramids almost Egyptian, and none ever fell or was broken. And the subtle man praised the waiter, saying, "You are the best waiter in this whole city. There is none other like you. You have a special power. You are an exceptional man."

And he met a street-sweeper, who cleaned the streets of dirt, dung, and offal. He swept a wider space and swept it cleaner than did any of his fellows. And the subtle man praised the street-sweeper, saying, "You are the best sweeper in any of the gangs. None of them can come near you. You have a special power. You are an exceptional man."

And the subtle man had his way with them all.

## CHAINS

IN a mad-house he sat and moaned all the day long of chains, chains, chains. Everywhere chains, and on everybody. Chains wound about every son and daughter of man and woman. Hands, feet, head, and soul bound fast in chains.

"What is love but a chain binding one to another — hampering the free impulses of the spirit? My love binds me, and your love binds me. I can not do what I would — that love holds me. Oh, I would seek out far lands, and I can not. I would sacrifice myself for a noble purpose, and I can not. I would be an artist, a soldier, a saint, a martyr, and I can not. That love constrains me. That love holds me in the narrow ruts of sordid ways. I can not loose myself, and it is the chain of love that strangles my spirit.

"And the chains of custom! What I did yesterday that must I do to-day. What you and a thousand others did yesterday that must I do to-day. What men long dead and rotten did in their puny time, must I do to-day. Oh, I am smothered, I am suffocated, so heavy is the weight of custom's chains. And if I strive to burst them asunder! Idle old slaves sit by and mock my struggles. 'Fool!' they say, 'he strives to be free.'— They would kill me rather than see me free. They have killed others, and me too would they kill. My freedom would reproach their slavery.

"And the chains of hate! I hate you, and I am

bound by it. Every hate I cherish or foster is a chain, and I can not free myself of hate, nor envy, nor avarice, nor pride, nor lust. And each of them is a chain. I am enwrapped by them. I am involved in them, tied fast as with triple steel, nay, bound fast by these like a Laocoon crushed by nauseous snakes. Stronger are they than steel — and alive! Oh, the horrid stench of them! Oh, the hot breath and the coldness of them! And the gods — they laugh at me. They fastened these chains about me. I didn't do it. Not I. Out of the depths of chaos the gods summoned these living chains to press the soul out of me. As a punishment? — Yes, as a punishment for crimes committed by others. So I am told. My fathers sinned, and for their sins these hideous coils tighten around me.

"Is it to wonder that I am mad? You, you too are bound, and they call you sane. Ah, God! a madness, a thousand madnesses, rather than such stupidity!"

# INTEREST

ONCE upon a time there was a country that groaned under a burden of great taxation, and both people and rulers were in despair, for a new war threatened, and more money must be raised. And the rulers looked diligently about to discover what tax could be added, but the people trembled, for hardly could they bear what was already upon them.

And there came out of the wilderness a poor hermit who long had reflected in solitude on the woes of his country, and he brought with him a message that stirred up his hearers. Tidings came to the rulers that sedition was likely in that part of the country where roamed the mad hermit.

So the rulers sent down an armed guard that took the hermit and brought him up to the city where dwelt the rulers. "What is this new message," they asked him, "that thou scatterest abroad to the harm of the people?"

"Nay, my masters," answered the hermit, "not to the harm of the people, not that — but I will gladly declare it to you."

"Do so at once," commanded the rulers.

"When I was a young man and went much about among the people," said the hermit, "I observed that always the most prosperous were the lenders of money. They were the fattest and sleekest. When drouth or flood or other disaster fell on the country, the lenders of money were the

last to suffer. And most often indeed they grew richer, for the goods of their neighbors, already distressed, were forfeit to them. So that most of the people were subject not so much to the government as to the lenders of money, who were empowered by law to exact from their neighbors a usury called interest."

"Yea, such is the law," answered the rulers.

"I have since then reflected," continued the hermit, "that money is purely the state's creature. No citizen is ever permitted to coin any money, though he have uncounted stores of gold and of silver. Am I right, O ye rulers?"

"You are right," answered the rulers.

"Well, I see then no reason," spoke out the hermit, "why the state should not derive all of the benefit from its own creature."

"Meaning what?" asked the rulers.

"Enact a law forbidding any man to charge anything for the loan of his money," answered the hermit, "and providing that the state alone shall have the right to receive interest, making the penalty the same as for counterfeit coinage."

"But what would become of those who must borrow money?"

"Let the state lend it to them on the same sort of security as is now demanded by those who prosper so greatly at the expense of the people."

"But what would it profit the thrifty to save against age or misfortune?"

"The state could borrow all savings at some low rate of interest, because the debt would be safe for the lender. His risk would be nothing, because the state would repay when he wished it."

"Oh," said the rulers, "and the rate paid by the state would be lower than that it received on its lending?"

"True," said the hermit, "and the difference need not be great, one or two per cent on all of the loans in the country would provide for all its expenses, and taxes could be decreased or abolished, and the people would no longer be subject to lenders of money, but their whole allegiance would fall to the state."

"And what would become of the lenders of money?"

"Some of them could be employed by the state at a fair salary to lend out the state's money. The others could engage in some business that would increase the real wealth of the country, such as manufacturing or farming or mining or building."

But the rulers decided that the hermit was crazy, and cast him in prison.

## VERITY

ONCE upon a time a ruler in the dominion of knowledge summoned before him his principal vassals and required of each a statement of plans and of purpose, a reason for being. And the names of these vassals were Art and Religion and Philosophy and Science.

To the question propounded the answer of Art was, "I seek out beauty and express it, to promote human happiness."

And of Religion, "I seek out the rules of right conduct and explain them, to promote human happiness."

And Philosophy said, "I seek out the truth and divulge it, to promote human happiness."

And Science replied, "I seek out knowledge and classify it, to promote human happiness."

"So all of you are working to promote human happiness?" said the ruler.

"Yes, all of us," they answered.

"Why, then, is there not more human happiness?" asked the ruler.

"Because men are lazy, and will not think," answered Science.

"Because men are stupid, and can not think," said Philosophy.

"Because men are blind, and can not see," answered Art.

"Because men are selfish, and will not sacrifice," said Religion.

"So the whole fault lies in men, and none in you," said the ruler.

"Yes," said they, "the fault is in men."

"Yet, if there were no men, not a one of you would have any excuse for being?" asked the ruler.

"No," said they after some hesitation, "we wouldn't."

"Well," said the ruler, "you have been working on men a long time, and you haven't accomplished much, what do you propose for the future?"

"It is this way," said Art, "often when I have created something of the greatest beauty, Religion attacks and seeks to destroy it."

"And I," said Philosophy, "have always been thwarted and persecuted by that same religion."

"And I," said Science, "have been compelled by Religion to fight for my life in ceaseless struggle."

But Religion answered, "Art disregards me, Philosophy flouts me, and Science denies me. What am I to do? I must live."

The ruler pondered. For a long time he sat rapt in reflection. At last he spoke, "I have long desired that men should be happy. Most of them are not happy, and have never been, hence this conference. It is time that some real progress were made.

"Religion, you are the oldest, and you have the commonest fault of age, which is intolerance. All of the others are really your children. They sprang from you. It is true that they often fail in filial reverence, but you have been jealous and afraid. You have feared that they would snatch from you your dominion over the hearts and minds

of men, hence you have often been harsh, stubborn, and unreasonable. For this you deserve censure.

"And you, the rest of you — Art, Science, and Philosophy — each of you has sought at times to supplant his father. Know now for all time that that is impossible. It can not be done. And there has been much scorn and bickering among you, each claiming to be greater than the others. That is foolish. Stop it. All three of you are necessary, as also is Religion.

"The reason why all of you together have not done more for the promotion of human happiness, is that you have not worked together. Ultimately you must work together. It is inevitable. So why not begin now? You have been as blind, stupid, and selfish as you have said men are. Haven't you?"

"Perhaps we have," said Philosophy in their common defense, "but may I speak openly?"

"Proceed," said the ruler.

"Well, for some reason or other, while working for men, we have been compelled to work solely through men. We have had to depend on men to interpret us, to give us a voice. I ask you is that fair? Must it ever be so?"

"Whether fair or not," said the ruler, "it must ever be so. Men can understand only what comes through men."

"Alas!" sighed they all, "the time will be long."

## A KING AMONG MEN

ONCE on a time there was a king who coveted wider dominions. He looked all about him where lay the well-ordered lands of neighboring nations, and found them fair and desirable. So in his own heart he said privily, "I will take them."

He set to work then to raise a great army, and made every man of his kingdom into a soldier. And he gathered from the four corners of his realm a great treasure, and caused to be forged numberless weapons of war. And while this was a-doing, he entered into covenants with all neighboring nations to preserve peace between his people and theirs, feigning to fear that some would attack him, and professing a love for the blessings of peace. But in his own heart he said privily, "So I will blind them."

And it came to pass that all was ready — the soldiers, the treasure, and the weapons. And the neighboring nations slept in a false security, lulled by their faith in the treaties. And the king commanded his armies to make a sudden onrush upon the nearest of the neighboring nations. And this they did, spreading death and destruction and anguish and woe and desolation. And the king rejoiced in his heart saying privily, "To this I will add all of the others, and rule over them all."

But lo! this nearest of nations gathered up all of its strength, and held back the armies of the

king till other nations could make ready and assemble their hosts to defend their homes and their firesides. And the king was angered, and commanded that the people of the nearest of nations should be tortured and starved and crucified, and their women outraged and deflowered. And it was done by his soldiers. And the king rejoiced in his heart, saying privily, "So will I strike terror into all of the others."

But the king was mistaken, for all of the other nations formed a league against him, and opposed him with numberless soldiers and countless weapons of war. And multitudes of the soldiers of the king were slain. And into the realm of the king crept hunger and misery and death, insomuch that his people began to murmur. Then the king told his people that God was with him, directing him in all things. But in his own heart he said privily, "There is no God, but so will I fool them, and stir them to still greater effort to win for me wider dominions."

And he did fool them. And they made ever greater sacrifices, and strove ever more valiantly in the name of patriotism and religion, believing that they were fighting a holy war and suffering for the defense of their country. And the king gave them iron crosses and medals for their bravery, and praised them, calling them heroes. But in his own heart he said privily, "What fools they are! I hold myself safe, and they give up their lives and the lives of their kindred that I may get wider dominions. What fools they are!"

But the time came when the soldiers of the neighboring nations defeated and drove back the

armies of the king. And the king's own people rose up against him, saying, "We have been fools. We have debauched ourselves and murdered our neighbors. God have mercy upon us!"

And they took the king and hanged him.

## REFLECTION

A CERTAIN honest man fell among thieves, who beat him and stripped him of all he had. As they divided their booty, the beaten man groaned loudly, and some feeling of pity stirred their hearts, but it was stilled by the oldest and wickedest among them, who said, "If the truth were known, he is probably no better than we are. Somehow or other he stole what he had, and I'll bet on it."

So there was a lecher sitting in church listening to the sermon of a pious preacher famed for his purity of thought and life, and the preacher was denouncing the sins of the flesh. The lecher was moved with remorse and contrition, but he stifled them by saying to himself, "If the truth were known, he is no better than I am. He is smoother, that's all. And I'll bet the sisters of the church could tell some queer stories if they were a mind to."

After the service the respectable women who were in attendance, filed decorously out carrying their prayer-books. And a harlot who happened to pass on the other side of the street, saw them, and was filled with a feeling of shame and of yearning, but she quelled it by muttering, "If the truth were known, they are no better than I am. They haven't been found out, that's all, the mincing hypocrites."

So a foul murderer stood before a just and up-

right judge to be sentenced. And the judge added to the sentence some words of commiseration, and his voice shook with pity for the condemned. The murderer was touched by the judge's sympathy, and felt some impulse to repentance, but he throttled it by thinking. "If the truth were known, he is no better than I am. And he sits up there pretending to be so high and so mighty. May God damn him!"

And the man who was robbed was honest, and the preacher was pure, and the women coming out of the church were chaste, and the judge was upright and just.

But each of us looks at his fellows through a glass that is too often merely a mirror.

## TRAGEDY

ONCE upon a time there was a husband who suspected the fidelity of his wife, for she was quite fond of an officer accustomed to visit their home. But soon after the suspicion arose, the officer was ordered to a far country, where he was killed. So the husband said nothing.

In the course of time the wife bore a son. Hardly could the husband restrain his anxiety till the birth to examine the child's features, so fearful was he of his honor. He could not wait for the child to be brought for inspection, but on its first wail, slipped into the room of his wife to peer at its face. But that revealed nothing. The features were as yet undertermined.

But the wife, though weakened by travail, was aware of his presence, and whispered, " Oh, John, it is a boy, and he is your image."

Then at the word of the doctor, the husband retired from the room and said nothing, but there was in him a hope that the eye of the mother could detect a resemblance not apparent to him — a wild hope, a precious hope.

Months went by, slipped into years, and the boy's features took shape and developed. Ever it was the custom of the wife to point out to the husband how the boy was his reproduction. " Look at his eyes," she would say, " they are yours. And his mouth and his ears, his form and com-

plexion. You ought to be proud. He is you over again."

And the husband did look, but what he saw was quite different. Each passing month brought clearly before him some hated resemblance to the man who was dead. There was a trick of the eye-brow altogether exact, a curve of the nostril, even a mode of moving the hands, and shape of the fingers.

He no longer had a suspicion, he was certain. His wife had betrayed him, and was lying to seal the deception. What should he do? What could he do? He brought himself to decide that whatever was right he would do it. Whatever it cost, he would do it.

For the woman he felt naught but deep loathing. But there was the child with its life all before it — and innocent. Should it bear the burden? Was it right that the child should bear the horrible burden? He could not love the child. No, not that. He could not love it. Yet, the child had done no wrong, and ought never to know. The child must be spared the fatal blight of that knowledge.

But how punish the woman without hurting the child? His mind busied itself with that problem, but his behaviour was such that the woman never suspected. He caressed her as of yore, and she thought him a fool blinded by her words. She rejoiced in her heart that he was a fool blinded by her words, but fear slept with her, grisly fear slept with her.

He might have secretly killed the woman, but he would not stain his soul, though it were better

for the child to be motherless than have such a mother. He would not stain his soul — nor was it in his heart to help the child, he could not reach to that. Not to hinder was all that he could compass. That tried his strength to the utmost.

The problem was never solved. He died. And the weak woman, thinking on him, was overcome with a tardy repentance. She felt the need of confession. She yearned for confession, as aforetime she had yearned for the officer. And she confessed to the child. Oh, God, she confessed to the child!

# THE WAY TO FORGET

ONCE upon a time there was a man who had done many things of which he was ashamed. They were secret things, and known to no one else in the wide world save himself alone. Nevertheless he could not shut them from his memory. His mind dwelt on them continually. So he became restless. He could not sleep at night. And in the day he could not bear to be alone, but sought ever to surround himself with a crowd, so that his thoughts might be diverted from the recollection of the shameful deeds.

But even in the midst of a company he could not wholly forget. For there would come moments of silence in even the gayest throng. So the man was dismayed. He had resolved never to confess to a living soul, but in himself he could find no comfort.

"I will forget," he would say, "I will forget." And he would gird himself to the effort. But he could not forget.

At length he realized that of himself he could not forget, but must seek aid from some other. And he pondered where he should seek it. From priest or physician? From parents or friends or the wife of his bosom?

But no, he would not confess to any of these. He could not bear for them to know that he had been so guilty. He was filled with despair. Should he go to a stranger? — No, for the stranger would have forever a handle upon him. He could not go to a stranger. He dared not trust any stranger.

One day on the street he encountered a beggar, an old man, feeble and dirty and quavering. And the beggar was very persistent, catching the man by the sleeve to detain him and tell him a tale of privation and sadness.

But the man answered, "Your sorrows are nothing. They can be cured with a pittance, while mine are so great that no money can cure them."

"Oh, come with me," said the beggar.

And the man, on the whim of the moment, followed the beggar, and was led by the tottering steps of the beggar to a hovel, where dwelt in squalid disease the beggar's old wife, betrayed daughter, and bastard grand-child.

"Look at these," said the beggar, "and at me."

"Oh, I must help you," said the man, "I must help you."

And straightway he sent for a doctor and clothes and food and a wagon, and women and men to wash these foul people and clothe them in cleanness. And he helped in the task. All that day he spent in relieving them and cleaning them and moving them to comfortable quarters.

When night came, he left them, to return to his home. As he walked on his way, all of a sudden he started, "By Jove," he said, "by Jove, I forgot! Oh, thank God, I forgot! I have found it. I have found it. I have found the way to forget. Oh, never, never, shall I forsake it!"

And afterward the man was happy, for he was ever piling acts of kindness on his past deeds of shame, until at last they were quite covered up out of all sight of his memory.

## THE REMEDY

ONCE there lived a man who was deeply in debt, for he and his family spent more than he made. And the man was harassed and bewildered. It seemed to him that every time he paid a bill, two more came in to take the place of the paid one. And he was at the end of his wits.

He hated to tell his wife and his children, because, after all, they spent no more than their neighbors. And the man was afraid his wife would think him a failure. And he was afraid also he would lose the esteem of his neighbors. For indeed he was proud, and had held his head as high as the next one. So he didn't know what to do.

Life lost its charm for him, and he was fast becoming morose and embittered. This month he put off paying one man, and the next another, hoping at least to preserve some sort of credit, and praying that something might happen to make his business more profitable. He could hardly sleep at night, and his days were full of dreadful anxiety.

"Oh," said he to himself, "I am ruined. There is no way out except to increase my income or decrease expenses. And neither of them is for me possible. Oh, I can not endure it."

The dark angel of death peered over his shoulder and whispered, "Come to me. I can relieve you, free you from worry, give you rest from all care and distresses. Come with me."

And half was he tempted. But the thought of his family, how they would fare worse then than ever, withheld him. And at last he decided that he would give up all efforts to bolster his credit by indirect shifts, would be frank and open. So he sent word to all whom he owed to assemble at the place of his business.

They came, and he told them the state of his business. They sat and listened. And many of them were more experienced than the man who was deeply in debt. And when he had finished telling what he had and he hadn't, they conferred one with another, and appointed a spokesman, who said to the man so deeply in debt, "We have listened. We thank you for what you have told us. We are fully convinced that you are quite honest. And we believe it would be to our profit to give you more time. The trouble with you, in our judgment, is that you have not conducted your business so as to get the most out of it."

And then he went on to make wise suggestions. And the man, as he listened, wondered that he never before had thought of the things that the spokesman was saying. They seemed now so plain and so simple. And he could hardly refrain from embracing the speaker, as the way out of his troubles was made clearer and clearer.

# A COMMONPLACE

ONCE upon a time a man met a woman who lived in the district set aside for harlots, and he fell into talk with her. She told him some things about her past life, and some things she withheld. And some of the things were true, but many of them were untrue, for the woman was a great liar.

She said that she had come of respectable parents, had been well brought up and educated, had sung in a church choir, and had been married to a rich man who had deserted her, and left her to fight with the world as best she could, and that she never had harmed anybody, and never had done any wrong, and had taken to an evil life to escape starvation. As she told her tale she pitied herself greatly, and at the end she buried her face in her hands, and wept bitterly.

But the man said, "Surely there must have been some reason. Did you love your parents and obey them?"

"Yes," she said, "I did."

"Did you attend the church and believe in its teaching?"

"Yes," she said, "I did."

"Were you faithful to your husband and considerate?"

"Yes," she said, "I was."

"Well," said the man, "I am puzzled. You are sure that you harmed no one, and yet every one

was against you — that is odd. But I have a suspicion."

"You needn't be suspecting me," said the woman, "I don't care anything about your suspicions. Take it or leave it just as I have told it. To hell with you."

"No," said the man, "you do care, and you wish to know what that suspicion is."

"I don't," said the woman, but she lingered and did not pass on.

"I suspect," said the man, "that you were always trying to do one thing, and your parents and the church and your husband were always objecting, and stood in the way."

"You are a liar," said the woman, "I wasn't."

"You were," said the man, "and I know it."

"I wasn't,'" said the woman, "I never did do anything but try to have a good time."

"Alas! one more," said the man, and left her there wondering.

## THE SEARCH

LONG ago in ancient times there was a man who travelled about looking for something. He began the quest early in life, and it lasted to the day of his death, so that he came to be known as the greatest of travellers. He sought always one and the same thing, but he never could find it.

He lay on his death bed, and friends gathered around to comfort him, "You have travelled widely," they said, "and have seen much, and you are a wise man. It grieves our hearts to know that you must so soon start on the last great journey. Perhaps there is something we can do, some last wish that we may fulfil."

"There is," said the traveller, "but I may confide it to only one of you. Therefore I pray you cast lots to determine which one it shall be."

Lots were cast, and all of the friends, except the one on whom the lot fell, withdrew from the room. To him turned the traveller, and said, "O friend, when I was a young man, Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, entrusted to me the task of bestowing on one of the sons of men a precious gift, but it could be bestowed only on a man of a certain kind, and him have I sought my whole life through without finding. The lot has fallen on you. Doubtless you are chosen of the gods. Will you accept the mission and continue the search after I shall have been joined with my fathers?"

"Must I travel as widely as you?" asked the friend.

" That I know not, "answered the traveller, " you may find the man to-day or to-morrow or never. You may find him in this city or on some distant plain or nowhere, but at any rate you will be a messenger of the Goddess of Wisdom, bearing a precious gift. Will not that be honor sufficient? "

" It is enough," said the friend, " I pray you instruct me."

" When you find the man," said the traveller, " you are to deliver the gift, and he then in turn will become a messenger of the Goddess of Wisdom and find two more men like himself and share the gift with them. And each of these, two other like men, and share the gift with them, and so on in broadening succession, for the gift is capable of infinite division without diminution, as becometh a gift of Minerva. Or if you fail, as I have done, then entrust the gift to a friend that survives you, as I now am about to entrust it to you."

" What is that gift? " asked the friend.

" It is the true secret of happiness," answered the traveller, " I have it here traced on this parchment."

" What is that secret? "

" I know not. I could never decipher it. It can be read only by a man of a certain description, and him I never could find."

" And what sort of man is that? "

" A man who never pretends."

So from that day to this, friend after friend has continued the search for a man who never pretends, but the secret is still undeciphered.

## THE BIRTH-MARK

A LONG time ago there was a man with a birth-mark, and he fancied that the eye of every beholder fell first on this blemish. So he was loth to meet any strangers. He was shy and reserved when he met them, watching their faces for the gleam of repulsion or pity. And on the faces of most he would find it. As a rule, on the faces of men was repulsion, on the faces of women was pity.

But there came one day a magician, who was indeed a great healer, saying that he could take off the birth-mark, and leave the skin as smooth as an infant's. And it was done. But the man was told that every year by a given date he must send a certain sum of money to the magician in a far away city, or the mark would return. He was filled with rejoicing, and embraced the magician, calling him his great benefactor and thinking not at all of the money.

Then no longer was there repulsion or pity in the glance of beholders, for the man was quite handsome. On the faces of men he saw admiration or envy, and admiration on the faces of women. So he became bold and assertive. And he married a beautiful woman. But as the recurring time drew near for the payment, a fear would awake in his bosom that he could not raise the money for the magician.

Year followed year and he prospered, and al-

ways the payment was duly sent to the far away city. And no sign of the mark was apparent. But at length the time did come when he had not the money. He tried every way to procure it. At last it had to be stolen. For this he was apprehended and committed to prison. But he bore no grudge against the magician.

Time rolled on in its circuit, and again was at hand the date of the payment. But the man was in prison. The date passed, and he sent no money. For how could he? And every morning thereafter he eagerly scanned in his broken bit of a mirror, his face, to see if the mark were returning. But there was no sign. The skin was still smooth and unbroken. And so to the end of his term in the prison, the mark never came back.

He was released, but tarried not even to visit his beautiful wife. He went hotfoot to the city where dwelt the magician, and slew him. For the man with the birth-mark was human.

## THE ABSURDEST OF ALL THINGS

I WENT about seeking the absurdest of all things, for the notion had struck me that it would be amusing to witness. And I visited many places and saw many things and persons and actions. On several occasions I thought I had found something absurder than anything could be, and each time I was tempted to rest and say, "There is no need to go further, for surely I have found it. Nothing could be more absurd."

But as I thought over each of these things, I was far from content, for they seemed less absurd than at first I had deemed them. So I made up my mind to find something that would seem ever absurder the more I should ponder.

It happened that my feet were led into a cathedral rich with the glory of canvas and crystal and marble. And in the pulpit was preaching a prelate in vestments ablaze with costly gems and stiff with broidery of gold and of silver.

And of what was he preaching? — Why, of the lowly Nazarene, whom he claimed as exemplar. And I thought of the Christ, who had but the poorest of raiment.

I knew that the prelate lived in abundance on the richest of viands. And I thought of the Christ and the raw ears of corn plucked on a Sabbath.

The prelate, I knew, dwelt in a palace, and was slavishly served by hired lackeys. And I thought of the Christ with no place to lay his head and no wages except love to pay to his servants.

I knew that the prelate had gained his position by scheming intrigue. And I thought of the Christ, preferring others in honor.

At last my quest was completed, no need to look further. Here in the church I had found it — the absurdest of all things.

And it was not amusing. No, no, it was not amusing.

## JUSTICE

ONCE upon a time an expert accountant was brought before a court to be tried on the charge of stealing money from his employer. He pleaded guilty, because he knew that the proof was ready. So it became the duty of the judge to pronounce sentence upon him.

"Is he a good accountant?" the judge asked the employer.

"Most excellent, your honor."

"Is he painstaking and accurate?"

"That is he, your honor."

"Stand up," said the judge to the accountant, "the state is in need of your service; I appoint you expert accountant for the commonwealth at the same salary as you have received from private employers, and each day you shall report to a physician, whose name I shall give you."

"But,— but, your honor, the man has stolen my money, am I to have no revenge?" asked the employer.

"No, no revenge, but I have not completed the sentence. And out of the salary the defendant shall pay his employer in monthly installments all that he has stolen with full legal interest."

"But he ought to be punished, it is dangerous to let him go free," said the employer.

"The state takes the risk," answered the judge, "he is one of the state's children who is mentally ill and perhaps we can cure him. If he were your

son and had stolen your money, what would you do with him?"

"I would prosecute him and send him to prison," said the employer.

"I sentence you to jail as an unnatural father," answered the judge, "and each day a minister whom I shall appoint will come to instruct you. You are revengeful, unfeeling, and greedy, but you too are a child of the state and perhaps we can cure you."

But then arose a great murmur from all of the lawyers, because even the oldest and most learned among them could remember no precedent.

## THE BUSY IMP

ONCE upon a time there was a miner who dug into the earth, seeking pure gold, bright, yellow gold. And his mind was filled with its glitter. At night in his dreams he grasped with palsied hands at lustrous nuggets too large to be lifted, and he sifted streams of shining dust through trembling fingers. Oh, gold, gold, gold — for gold he toiled and sweated. Not fatigue, but only exhaustion, ever caused him to rest from his labors. And soon he was digging again, seeking the gold.

He found it.

"Oh, I have found it! I have found it! I have found it!" he shrieked in mad joy, "I have found it."

There in the lone wilderness he shrieked with mad joy, as if he would tell all the world he had found it. He capered about at the head of the pit, waving his arms and shrieking, "I have found it!"

"Well, what of it?" he heard a voice say, a calm, piping voice, "What of it?"

Sitting on top of the dump was an imp, a cool, passionless imp. The miner's jaw dropped as he saw him.

"The way you carry on," said the imp, "one would think that you are the first man who ever found any gold. There have been many others. And in time the gold has made precious fools of most of them. But you leave it little work for the future. You seem already demented."

"Ha!" said the miner, "ha!"

"Is that the best you can do?" asked the imp.

"I—I don't know," stammered the miner, "the fact is, I wasn't expecting to see you."

"No," said the imp, "but I always come to the sudden discoverer of riches. That is my business."

"Oh, it is," said the miner, "I didn't know that. What do you come for?"

"I come to suggest various ways of spending the money," said the imp. "They never would know what to do with their money, if I didn't make the suggestions."

"Oh, indeed," said the miner, "I am very much obliged, but I don't need your suggestions. I know what I am going to do with my money."

"Oh, you do?" said the imp, "May I ask what?"

"Well, I have a great many poor relatives, and I am going to make all of them independent," said the miner.

"Oh, you are?" sneered the imp, "That's all right, but they are used to being poor. And the chances are that they will quarrel over the money you give them, and hate you for giving more to one than another, or less, or the same amount."

"And then I am going to build a hospital for sick children in my native town," said the miner.

"Fine," said the imp, "fine, but there are plenty of hospitals already, and there are not very many sick children in your native town anyway, and none of them ever did anything for you, that's plain."

"And I am going to find poor but deserving young men, and pay for their education."

"Good, good," said the imp, "but you didn't

have much education, and here you are a rich man, and you have made your own money. Look at the boys that you grew up with and that were educated. Not a one of them has made as much as you have."

"And I will save out just enough money for myself to live in modest comfort," added the miner.

"I told you in the beginning you were a fool," said the imp. "You might save up your money and have the whole countryside envying you and pointing you out as the richest man there. And a whole lot of pleasure is to be got out of women and wine, but I see there is no use in making suggestions to you. If a man hasn't sense enough to look out for himself, nobody can help him, so good-bye!"

The imp flitted away. The miner stared after him.

At length the miner recovered his poise. And he thought then after this fashion, "The imp is right. I have toiled and slaved and sweated for this gold. Those others, they have done nothing. Why should I give it to them? Bah, I was a fool ever to think it. Every man for himself, that is the doctrine."

The imp, reading thought from afar, laughed aloud, as he said to himself, "It is easy, so easy, just too dead easy."

## THE SON OF MAN

THE good abbot called to him one of the brethren whom he loved most dearly, and said, "O Brother Aloysius, I am deeply distressed because I am persecuted asleep and awaking by a vision of a band of heretics doomed by the church to be purged by the ordeal of fire. In the vision they are marching on their way to the place of purgation, and are chanting: —

"'O Christ, thou darling of the ages, what have they done to thee? They have made of thee a god and have taken away the merit of thy suffering. What were three and thirty years to a god? — A moment in boundless eternity, a fleeting moment, inconsiderable! But to our dear, human, elder brother it was a life time.

"'What were scourging and crucifixion to a god? — A god would know that for him endless bliss and power would follow. A god would have knowledge. A god would straightway ascend to rule over the infinite hosts of Heaven, and would know it. But a man, a human, one of our family, what would he know during the agony? The future would be dark to him. It would be lit only by the candle of faith. Ah, he would need to be brave. O thou dear one, thou wert brave. We love thee for thy bravery.

"'What were goodness to a god? — He could not help being good, or he were no god. His nature would compel him to be good. Not even

a god could conceive of any true god as doing evil. But thou, thou holy man, thou wert tempted even as we. Oh, thou didst know the urge of passion, of envy, of avarice, of scorn. Thou didst feel them even as we. And glory to God in the highest! thou didst show us that human strength can conquer them all — just human strength. For a god to overcome them would avail us nought. We can not hope to rival a god.

"'O Christ, they have made of thee a god, and with that they bolster up their power. Self-appointed spokesmen, they claim to speak for thee. So forsooth their words have a divine authority. They have but little faith in humanity, or they seek some selfish end — and they fail in deeds, no less than we. But thou, thou Son of Man, thou didst prove and sanctify thy words with holy deeds. And words and deeds called, and do call, to the deeps within us, and our love answers. There is no other warrant needed.

"'O child of the great Father, even as we, thy brothers, are children, accept our love. Know that we hold thee in our heart of hearts. We too would deify thee, if our love forbade us not. But we seek not power or profit. We want no dominion over the minds of our brothers and thine. We would have their love, not their tithes, not their obeisances. If this is self-righteousness, we know it not. We bare our souls to thee. Oh, we would worship God, the Father, as didst thou. We would be thy fellow-worshipers. And we believe that thou wouldst wish our love, not our worship.

"'God grant that we wrong not thy dear memory! Thou hast spoken, acted, lived. Thou

hast made clear to us, all that thou couldst explain. We ask of thee no further light. Thy dear lips, as ours will be, are sealed in death. But we believe with thee that the grave hath not an endless victory. After it are the many mansions of our common Father. In them shall we meet with thee, and learn the mysteries of life and death, and hear all of thy sad, sweet, glorious history.

" ' O God in the highest, O Father of him and of us, hear our humble prayers.' "

" But surely, reverend father," said Aloysius, " theirs is a most damnable heresy. They deny the Holy Trinity."

" Yes, yes, Aloysius, theirs is a damnable heresy, yet I could wish, I could wish — no, I thank thee, Aloysius, theirs is a most damnable heresy, and their souls should be purged of it. I thank thee, Aloysius."

## THE POOR PREACHER

IN a country not so very far away there was a preacher poor in this world's goods, and he had a family. As he preached from the pulpit, his eye would ever seek out from among the congregation assembled before him the eye of one certain member. The eye sought out was cold and indifferent, but it drew the eye of the preacher like a magnet.

And from time to time the wife of the preacher would turn her head to catch the eye of that certain member, the eye that was cold and indifferent. It was a dull, muddy eye, but the wife of the preacher could not forbear to look at it often. And then for the merest fraction of time her eye would seek and meet the eye of her husband, and his sermon would change its tone or its tenor.

One might think that the wife and her husband had talked before service — before every service — about that certain member whose eye was cold and indifferent. And they had. One might hope that the wife and her husband had conspired with all tenderness to kindle in the eye that was cold and indifferent the light of the love of their Master and of his children, their poor fellow mortals. But they hadn't.

When the service was over, both the preacher and his wife were sure to shake the hand of that certain member, and to say pleasant things to him. And they inquired with much feeling about his

health and his family. And though they didn't mention it, they hoped quite sincerely that he had not been displeased by anything that the preacher had said.

On reaching their home, the wife would say to the preacher, " Pray be more careful. If you go on the way you have done, you may hurt his feelings."

And the preacher would reply, " Oh, no, I don't think so, he is really broad-minded. There are some things I must say as a preacher of the gospel, and he will know how to take them."

If any should wonder why the preacher and his wife were so deeply concerned about that certain member and were so anxious to please him, perhaps the wonder will vanish when it is known that among all of the members he was the richest.

## SECRETS

LONG, long ago there was a rich old man who went out a-wooing, and bought himself a wife, who was both young and pretty. When he offered his hand and his heart and his money, the woman told him that she didn't love him. But he said that didn't matter, he was sure she would learn to, and if she didn't, she would at least be his wife, and it was a wife that he wanted. So the bargain was struck.

Some months after the wedding there came an inevitable lover, so that the rich old man suffered from jealousy, and repented his bargain. But he didn't know how to get even, for if he divorced her, he would still have to give her a part of his fortune. But he was a shrewd old man, and never had given up a problem that involved the saving of money. So he thought and he thought and he thought.

At last he said to his wife, "I observe that you have a lover."

And she answered, "What had you a right to expect? I told you that I didn't love you."

"True," said the man, "but I bought you, and I have paid a high price, and it is my purpose to keep you."

The woman laughed in his face, and retorted, "You can't buy a wife. It is foolish to think it."

But the old man was not at the end of his tether, for he went to a witch who told him a

secret and gave him an ointment. And at night when his wife was a-sleeping, he lightly anointed her hands and her face with the ointment. And the consequence was that when she awakened, she discovered that she was splotched with a hideous color. And it wouldn't come off with washing or rubbing.

For days and days she put off her lover and wouldn't allow him to see her. But at last the rich old man wrote him a note to invite him to dinner. He came, and was shocked beyond measure to see the hideous color. And as soon as he could, he fled, and came back no more.

And the rich old man was delighted, but he told his wife of the witch who could cure her. And the wife went at once to the witch, who took off the ointment, but she told the young wife that the discoloration was but the outward sign of the illicit love that she harbored, and that it would return if she were ever again guilty.

This alarmed the young wife, and for a while she restrained her affections. But at length she conquered her fear and began another flirtation. And again the same thing happened, for the rich old man kept his eyes open. And the young wife believed the words of the witch, so she hardly dared think of any other man except her old husband.

The secret that the witch told the rich old man was this: "For some reason or other an illicit love for a woman will never survive the woman's complexion."

But alas! the days of witches are gone, and women now know all of their secrets.

## THE SINNERS

THERE was a man who betrayed his friend's wife, and every time they sinned, their hearts were filled with dread till they could again see the husband and friend, for they would know if he suspected.

The man would say to the wife, "When you saw him, did he suspect anything?"

And the woman would answer, "No, he didn't suspect."

In a little while then the wife would ask, "Do you think he suspects anything?"

And the man would say, "No, I don't think he ever suspects."

And so over and over again, at each of their meetings, the question was asked and the answer was given, and it was ever the same. But all of the asking and answering could never quiet the dread.

On the street, in his office, at the club, the man could not rest. He must go see his friend, to determine the matter. Always he dreaded to go, but anxiety drove him. He must go to see him.

And the wife, waiting at home, anxiously scanned the face of her husband at each return from his business. She dreaded his coming, but she longed for it, because she must know, know, know! And she was kinder and tenderer towards him. She made a screen out of tenderness behind which to hide the guilt of her passion.

The man and the wife, when they were together, were voluble in love, and swore to each other that their passion was pure, was sent of God, to fill them with joy. And often they spoke of unutterable bliss. Often he would look into the eyes whose glances of love were vowed to another, and swear that he was the happiest of mortals. And she, she would say, "Oh, my darling, how I love you! How happy you make me! Your love is so wonderful. Oh, you make me so happy!"

So day after day, and week after week, they vowed and protested that each made a heaven on earth for the other, and that they dwelt in that heaven amid unspeakable blisses.

But the truth was, they lived in hell, and they knew it.

## GOD'S LAW

ONCE upon a time there was a physician who dwelt with his four stalwart sons and two lovely daughters in a spacious home on a height adjoining a city. And it happened that a pestilence spreading through the land came in its awful progress to this city where dwelt the physician.

The citizens were attacked, and died by scores and by hundreds, but it was noticed that the ravages were greatest in low-lying regions near swamps or depressions. And the idea became current that the pestilence could not climb to a height, but must confine its destruction to the murky air of the lowlands.

So the physician, kind and benevolent, threw open his home to the stricken, made of it a hospital for the cure and the comfort of those whom the malady had smitten, brought in as many as the home could hold from cellar to attic. And he and his sons and his daughters tended the sick by day and by night with unwearying patience.

Oh, but then the stalwart sons, one after another, were themselves stricken. The pestilence was pitiless. Human strength could avail naught against it. All of the sons died, died in the home that was thought to be safe, so high was it placed above the regions around, where the pestilence had raged. The skill of the father, the care of the sisters was fruitless.

The physician was stricken with grief, bowed

down with sorrow, and in the throes of his anguish he cried out to God, "O heavenly Father, what have I done that thy hand hath fallen so heavily upon me? What have I done? Hast thou not told us to comfort and succor the sick and the sorrowful? Hast thou not enjoined upon us compassion and mercy and kindness? Hast thou not promised to reward us for deeds of benevolence and brotherly love? And yet, and yet I took into my very home those sorely afflicted. I tended and nursed them. I gave them my time and my labor, my food and my shelter. I spent my strength for them, and the strength of my sons and my daughters. And what is my recompense? — I am left desolate, desolate in my old age. All of my sons have been taken. Couldst thou not have left me one? Oh, if I have been a great sinner, couldst thou not have left me one? O God, what crime is it, what unforgivable crime is it that I have committed? For what have I been so grievously punished?"

God had answered the prayer before it was uttered, but the physician thought that God did not answer, that neither by word nor by sign did God answer.

Cold weather came, and the pestilence passed, disappeared throughout the whole country. Years came and went. The physician lived on, but the light of life had gone out for him and his daughters. They could take no joy, but felt they were scourged by the anger of God. And there were those who whispered that the physician must have been guilty of some secret sin, but there were others whose hearts were filled with love and with pity.

After a long, long time a scientist discovered God's law of the pestilence. And the law was merely that the malady was spread by mosquitoes. The physician didn't know that. He had not offended, but he knew not the law of the pestilence.

God's answer to him was the same as it has been and will be to the rest of his creatures through all of the ages, " Discover my law."

## BARE GIFTS

A YOUNG man, rich and compassionate, came crying, "What shall I do to save my fellow men?"

And he was answered, "Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me."

So straightway he went to his home, and caused his steward to make a reckoning of all that he had, and sold it, and gave the price thereof to be distributed to the poor. And he returned unto the Master and said, "Lo, I am ready to follow thee."

And the Master led him to a hovel, where dwelt a poor family, saying, "Here shall we abide for the night, and share the crust and the straw of these people."

"Nay, but Master," said the young man, "the place is dirty, and the people are foul and low-born. I have near at hand a friend, shall we not rather tarry for the night in his house? In the morning, if need be, we can return, and I will send for my steward and my servants to make this place clean."

"If thou shouldst send for thy steward and thy servants, they would not come," answered the Master, "for they have nothing more to expect from thee. And moreover they withheld a portion of thy money, and did not give all to the poor, as thou didst direct, and to-day are they drunken, and they laugh when they speak of thee, saying that thou art a fool."

The young man was greatly cast down, for his

steward and servants had seemed to him very faithful. Hardly could he pluck up heart to say, "But surely will my friend harbor us for the night. We need not stay in this sty."

"Still art thou blind," answered the Master. "Thou didst come to me crying, 'How shall I save my fellow men?' and I would show thee the way. Thou hast given all thy possessions save one. That thou wilt not give."

"And what, pray, is that possession I have not given?" asked the young man.

"It is thyself," said the Master.

## THE STINGY MAN

ONCE upon a time there dwelt in a town a man who was very stingy, and he was disliked by all of his neighbors. They said he was the meanest man in the world. But it happened that a preacher, wise and experienced in the workings of the human heart, came to live in that town.

The preacher was told about the stingy man. Indeed he heard from all sides how mean and stingy the man was. But to all informants the preacher replied with a smile, " Perhaps you don't know how charitable he is in secret."

That was all he said in words, but his smile seemed to intimate that he knew something he could not divulge. And he repeated this so often and to so many people, while showing himself so wise and so well informed about other things, the neighbors began to think that possibly they had indeed misjudged the stingy man. And there got to be a good deal of gossip about the sums that the stingy man gave away in secret. And they treated him with a new respect and consideration.

The stingy man could not fail to notice this new respect, so he began to think that, after all, his neighbors were good and deserving people, and he felt that he ought to do something for them. So one day, quite unexpectedy to her, he gave a little poor girl on the street a penny. And it happened that she told the preacher. As occasion offered, the preacher spread it around that the stingy man had been quite generous to a little poor

girl, who had been in dire need of charity. And the people felt still more respect for the stingy man, and his generosity was magnified in the whole community.

But the preacher told everybody that he had talked with the stingy man — as he really had — and went on to say, " He is very peculiar, and will not give anything to anybody who asks him, for he believes that giving should be done as the spirit moves him. So don't ask him."

Whenever a collection of any kind was taken up in that town thereafter, nobody asked the stingy man to contribute. At first he was gratified, thinking that he had escaped the notice of the collectors, but as time went on and nobody ever asked him to give anything, he felt slighted. And at last he asked why no one ever came to him for a contribution. He was answered that everybody knew he gave in secret all he could afford. And the answer was given in such sincerity that he could not doubt the belief of the speaker. And he went home thinking.

On the morrow he hunted up the collector, and offered him a sum of money. But the collector replied, " No, we can not accept so much from you. It is more than your proportion, but if you insist, we will let you give us half of that."

The stingy man thought he was dreaming, but gave the half, and fell straightway to musing. And soon thereafter he visited the preacher, and said to him, " I feel that I have not done my share in contributing to the charities of this community, and I wish that hereafter you would count me in on things of that kind."

"Oh, my dear brother," said the preacher, "almost ever since I came here, I have heard from all sides about your giving in secret. And we do not like to burden a generous heart too greatly."

"Nevertheless," said the stingy man, "I can afford to give more, and I wish to do it. So please don't neglect me."

## WHY?

"O FATHER, what of the human heart? What is it most like?" asked the neophyte.

And the prophet, answering, spake, "Most often I think of the human heart as a vine sending forth its tendrils in every direction seeking support. For it can not stand alone."

"And these tendrils, what are they?"

"The tendrils — they are the passions, the feelings. One is love, we shall say. It is put forth from the vine, weak, tender, an easy prey to the frost, to the heat. It reaches out, finds its mark. Wraps itself about, grows ever stronger — if it survives — and supports the vine. But there is also the tendril of hate. Its growth is the same. An old hate — how strong it is! And, my son, mark me well."

"Yes, father."

"While these tendrils support the vine, they also hold it in place, rigid. The young vine is blown here and there by the breeze, or the light touch of the gardener bends and directs it. But when old, innumerable tendrils have bound it fast, it is immovable."

"And what is the soil out of which the vine grows?"

"The soil is but the record and residue of past deeds from which the heart must draw much of its strength."

"Not all, not all of its strength?"

"No, the vine must reach upward to the air above it, and draw also from that."

"Oh, I see, father, the human heart must reach upward. But who is the gardener?"

"I am a gardener, an under-gardener of thy heart and of some others. But there is one great Gardener, whose directions I would follow, but alas! I sometimes fail through lack of skill or intelligence or will."

"Nay, nay, father, thou art near perfection."

"No, neither I nor anything human.— But the fruit of the vine, that is chief. Remember that it is for the fruit that the vine is tended. That should be sweet and luscious, affording joy and sustenance to the sons of men. God grant that I may so tend the vines entrusted to my keeping."

"Yes, father, but I have heard, and is it not true, that from the fruit of the vine is made a potion that steals away the minds of men and corrupts them?"

"Yea, that is true. Likewise is it true that the best fruits of the human heart are perverted by greed and tyranny."

"Father, speak more plainly. I do not understand."

"Fruits of the human heart are deeds. And alas! in the church the shining deeds of blessed martyrs are distilled into superstition, for the profit of priests; and in the state, the glorious deeds of patriots into false ideals of loyalty, for the power of kings."

"But, father, is that the end? Shall it always be so?"

"No, my son, that is not the end. The great

Gardener will not permit that to be the end. He will change that, is changing that, but by processes that are slow."

"Father, why are those processes slow?"

"Oh, God, why are they slow? Why are they slow? Oh, my son, I know not. Oh, they seem so slow; I don't know, my son, I don't know. But leave me now, I must pray. Oh, God, I must pray."

## NOT IN SO MANY WORDS

ONCE there was a man who wanted to know what was the truth. So he asked a priest. And the priest said, "Thus and so is the truth."

And the man said, "If I believe that, what then?"

And the priest answered, "You will join my church."

Then the man asked a politician. And the politician said, "Thus and so is the truth."

And the man said, "If I believe that, what then?"

And the politician answered, "You will join my party."

Then the man asked a merchant. And the merchant said, "Thus and so is the truth."

And the man said, "If I believe that, what then?"

And the merchant answered, "You will buy my goods."

Then the man asked a woman. And the woman said, "Thus and so is the truth."

And the man said, "If I believe that, what then?"

And the woman answered, "You will marry me."

Then the man asked a philosopher. And the philosopher said. "I don't know. And this side of the grave you never will know the truth about anything very important."

The man wouldn't believe the philosopher, but went and joined the church of the priest, the party of the politician, bought goods of the merchant, and married the woman.

So in the end he was no different from the most of us, caring not so much about the truth, but struggling for money to support the church, the party, the merchant, and the woman.

## A BIRTH

IT became known in Heaven and in Hell that a human baby was about to be born on earth. So a messenger from each of the two places was dispatched to instruct the young stranger who would come into the world without knowledge. Carefully the messengers were chosen. It was desired that each should well represent his home and his fellows. For there was no telling but that the baby might some day hold a high place among men and great power.

In Hell were many applicants for the honor. Envy and Greed and Sloth, Hatred, Revenge, and Anger, Lust and Pride and Cruelty — each clamored to be sent on the mission. But after much talk and confusion, Cunning stood up and said, "This baby may be born to more power than any other of the sons of men in a century. So let us be sure. Why send one of the children when the mother of all is here?"

The clamor subsided. The counsel of Cunning prevailed.

So in Heaven likewise were many anxious to go. Chastity, Temperance, Reverence, Loyalty, Truth, Patience, Forgiveness — all volunteered, and the claims of each had some warrant and approval. But at last Wisdom spoke, "Why send one of the children when the mother of all is here? Should she not rather go if she will? She has borne us

all, nourished us, guided us, and kept us alive. Surely she could give the best instruction."

The counsel of Wisdom prevailed.

Up glided the messenger from Hell. Down flew the messenger from Heaven. They met at the bedside of birth, and waited through the agony. Each sat expectant.

When the child was born, they walked on either side of the nurse who carried it to the bath, then down to its father, and on back again to the cradle. Here night and day they abode, so that whether sleeping or waking the child might receive their whispered instruction. Each knew how to color both thinking and dreaming. So no second of the child's life was free from the influence of either. And neither with all of her striving could quite overcome the strength of the other, though each summoned her children to help her.

The child waxed and grew large. Still the two teachers clung to their task with persistence. And now the results of their teaching showed more and more plainly. Sometimes the guidance of one, sometimes that of the other, dictated the child's action. So through youth to manhood, old age, and the grave, the child wavered between them.

It was odd — wasn't it? — that he should not have chosen one and clung to her. All his life long both were beside him. All of his life he had to compare them. There they both were, but it is odder that he never quite clearly saw either. He knew they were different, as different as Heaven and Hell where they came from. But he liked to confuse the one with the other, or he couldn't avoid it, or his eyes were afflicted with dimness. Per-

haps the two figures were shrouded, and he never quite dared to tear away the veils that concealed them. Who can say?

But the truth is that to his dying day, he wavered between them — between the Love of Self and the Love of Others, for these were the messengers that were sent by Hell and by Heaven.

## THE TOWERS

"LISTEN, O ye people," cried a mad dervish, "the towers of Benares will fall. Beware, ye passers-by, the towers of Benares will fall."

And the people going by glanced up to the lofty towers, and shook their heads, grinning, to think how mad the dervish was and how foolish his saying. Had not the towers been there always and withstood both earthquake and tempest?

But it happened that there was a beautiful wife in Benares, who was also a mother. And she was the light of the eyes of her husband, and to her children she was the queen of the angels. Joy and peace were her handmaidens, and went where she bade them. And lo! there came a seducer whose words were dripping with honey, and she listened.

And there was a banker in Benares whose vaults were stuffed full of the savings of widows and orphans and others who trusted their all to his keeping. And his name was the highest for honor and probity in all of the city. When any one called for the money that he had left with the banker, immediately the sum was forthcoming, and all was straight as it should be, so that the people were glad to feel their savings secure from both thief and robber. But, alas! there came a great schemer whispering of profits enormous, and the banker listened.

So there was a priest in Benares who was vowed to a life of denial. Temperate he was in all things,

and held in subjection the gross appetites of the body. All of his thoughts were of piety, and all of his deeds of benevolence. And the people revered him and boasted that he was almost a god, for he was above the lust and drunkenness and gluttony that commonly ruled over their fellows. But to him came a siren bringing red wine and rich food and sighing with passion, and he listened.

And afterwards came the mad dervish and walked through the streets of Benares. And he cried, "Lo, they have fallen. The towers have fallen. O ye people, the towers of Benares lie in the dust. Cover your faces and weep for the towers of Benares."

But the people glanced at the towers stretching their shining heights to the heavens, and wagged their heads as if to say, "What a very mad dervish! What a mad, foolish dervish!"

## BLIND

ONCE in a far country there was a human creature very near to the angels, because his work was the creation of beautiful things. All of his days were spent in dreaming out dreams of beauty and in giving them shape and substance. And often at night he could not sleep for thinking on means of expression.

It was a law of his being that he must dream and work, dream and work, dream and work, and he could not evade it. And the thing that he had to seek was always beauty. But alas, some malevolent power had so made it that he must ever yearn for applause and human sympathy, so that his joy in any creation was but small if no other eye than his could see its beauty.

And it happened that the inhabitants of his country were for the most part blind, or at least they were blind to beauty, because they were seeking always something else. And what they sought they found, but its glitter blinded them and bleared their eyes. And it must have dulled their minds, because they thought they were finding the best of all things. And it must have hardened their hearts, because they had but little sympathy with dreamers who sought out things of beauty, called them ne'er-do-wells and idlers, and heaped derision upon them.

So this poor human creature was very unhappy. "Look, look," he would cry to the crowd, "at the thing that I have created."

And the eyes of the crowd, if they were lifted at all from its grubbing into all kinds of filth where lay what it sought — those eyes were raised for one fleeting moment only to wither with scorn or mock with sarcasm him who cried out, and they returned to their seeking.

But by some sort of miracle this very unhappiness must weave for itself in the soul of the dreamer a garment of beauty, and walk forth to seek admiration from the same sordid folk, and always in vain. "One more folly," would they say, "oh, why doesn't the fool make something useful that can be eaten or worn or loaned out for profit?"

And they never could understand. That's the pity of it, they never could understand, so never, never could they be brought very near to the angels, but sank ever deeper and deeper into the mire of their grubbing.

## REPUTATION

THERE was once a man who undertook a great work. It was begun when he was a young man, and he had no idea of its real magnitude. But as he dreamed and planned and wrought, it grew under his hands. Indeed it promised much, but it would require the toil of a life-time for its completion.

At times the heart of the man was filled with enthusiasm and the joy of creation. He would say to himself, "How wonderful is it! Oh, it will make a stir in the world. I shall be famous. They will call me great and speak of me with admiration."

But at other times his heart would sink within him, and he would say, "It is nothing. It is less than nothing. What a fool am I to hope, to dream that I shall ever accomplish anything great. Oh, the thing is poor, weak, puerile. I hate it. It disgusts me."

And for weeks he would cease toiling, and give himself up to a listless despondency. "No," he would say, "no, it is not great, and if it were, the crowd would never recognize its greatness. What is the use? Why should I spend my life in toil? Why can I not give myself to enjoyment as do others?"

And he would waver in his mind — to go on or not to go on? For days he would wander distractedly about in feverish indecision, and at night

would toss on his couch with anxious forebodings lest, after all, his work were foolish, and would be despised, if ever it were finished.

A hundred times he concluded to abandon it, and a hundred times something called him back to it. One day it would be beautiful to him, another day disgusting. He tried other tasks more in keeping with the ordinary life about him, but he had no success at them. And he inevitably drifted back to the great work and to his alternations of enthusiasm and despair.

At last after he had long passed middle life, the work was finished, and made public.

And people beholding it, said, "What magnificence! What beauty! What infinite accuracy of detail! Oh, but that work required an unwavering will. What indomitable strength, what unfaltering persistence must have been in its creator!"

## GLADNESS AND SORROW

ONCE there was a man who had but a few months to live. The doctors had told him he would die, but would show beforehand no outward signs of disease, and he did not doubt the truth of their verdict. He looked into the mirror, saying to himself, "Just think, the face that I am looking at will soon be naught but dust — all of its features naught but dust. And all of this world will be dead to me. But I must be brave."

His family was the reason why he thought he should be brave. He would not shock them untimely by disclosing to them his awful secret. Let them live at least those few months in happiness. "Every moment of happiness is a treasure, and why should I," his thoughts ran, "destroy those treasures? My family is dearer to me than life. I will preserve the secret and pretend to be happy."

But the wife of his bosom was keen of sight, for her vision was sharpened by the strength of affection. And she could look into the heart of her husband. So she knew that his happiness was gone, and that he only pretended. But her love was such that she reasoned, "It were better for me not to ask him, for whatever it is, he withholds it for the sake of my happiness."

And that was a marvellous love in a woman.

And she was kinder to him than ever and tenderer. So he saw that she knew he was troubled, and it touched him. "My God" thought he,

"how it will grieve her, the dear heart. Oh, I must seem joyful to allay her suspicion."

And that was a marvellous love in a man.

The months went by, and all of the while this game of hide and seek, impelled by affection, continued, the man trying to hide his dismay, the woman seeking how best to dispel it, but neither speaking in words to the other of their secret disquiet.

At length the time was ripe according to the doctor's prediction. The day was come, and yet the man lived. And other days came and slipped into the past and piled themselves into weeks, and the man grew stronger. And hope awoke in his heart. "Oh, it may be," he thought, "that the doctors were wrong. What if I am not doomed, after all? Oh, God, perhaps I may live, live, live!"

Hardly could he refrain from rushing to the wife of his bosom to tell her the whole truth, but he checked himself, saying, "I must be sure."

And this was harder, far harder than hiding the sorrow — this waiting to see, this withholding of joy. But his wife sensed the hope in his speech, in his gesture, in all his demeanour, and perceived there was in him some secret of gladness. And she demanded to know what was this secret of gladness and was hurt when for a time he withheld it, yet she had borne with great patience his hoarding of his secret of sorrow.

For even love must stand silent before the portals of sorrow.

## MUTATION

IN a city not far from the sea dwelt a husband who thought he had cause to suspect that the wife of his bosom was untrue to the vows sworn at the altar. And his peace of mind was destroyed. He would sit by the side of the sea and brood on his trouble, neglecting all duties. And it seemed to him that in all the world there was no joy or pleasure whatever. The little laughing waves dancing in the sun seemed to sob and sigh, and the man was quite wretched, and moaned to himself, "Oh, how could she? How could she? Oh, never, never, could I have betrayed her. The faithless wanton! No temptation would ever have made me unfaithful."

As he sat brooding, there came by a woman, young, comely, and charming. Experienced she was in the ways and feelings of masculine things. So she sat down beside him, or not very far from him. And she sighed so loudly one would have thought her heart near to bursting, "Alas!" she said, "alas! alas!"

The husband looked up, and was touched with deep pity — a thing so fair, so young, and bowed in such sorrow. A spirit burdened like his with a grief past all speaking. So he arose and accosted the woman, "Pardon me, madame, but perhaps I can help you."

"No, no," she said, "my grief is past helping. I have lost my dear lover. He was faithless and left me."

"And you still love him?' queried the husband.

"Oh, better than life," answered the woman, "far better than life. Oh, I want him."

And the husband sat down beside her, very close to her. And he told her all of his troubles. He was eloquent about all of his troubles, and she listened and sighed.

So the next day they met again and the next and the next and the next. And at last the husband said, "You are the light of my life. Let us leave here together, and begin over anew in some happier country. Any country with you would be heaven."

But she answered, "Your wife? What of your wife and your children?"

He said, "My wife is a wanton, and my children — who knows? Oh, nothing matters but you, you, you. I want you, I love you."

"But do you certainly know that your wife has betrayed you? — You don't, I know you don't, for you have told me all your suspicions, and they are baseless. I have looked into the matter, and know all about it. You have wronged her."

"I don't care," said the husband, "I have long ceased to love her. You, you, I want you."

"So," the woman replied, "you would leave her, betray her, forsake her. All men are faithless. Return and beg her forgiveness."

She left him standing there frozen, and went on her way thinking, "I don't know whether his wife is guilty or not. But one thing is plain, he is a jealous, amorous old fool, I could never endure him."

## AN INSTANCE

ONCE upon a time there was a very poor man, who was a member of a very rich church. The man was so poor that often he and his wife were forced to go hungry. And his case came to the notice of the pastor and the deacons, and they said, "What shall we do for our poor brother?"

It happened then that the position of treasurer of the church was vacant. So on the motion of a kind-hearted deacon, it was determined that the poor man should be made treasurer, but his salary was to be small, as his duties were not very heavy.

He was duly installed in the office, and every Sunday he received the collections, and counted them, and deposited them in a bank to the credit of the church, and no man save him knew for certain how much was given to the church on each Sabbath. But not long after his election, the sums deposited grew less, despite the fact that the church increased in members and attendants.

So the deacons marvelled and said among themselves, "It must be that our poor brother has been stealing from the treasury of the Lord, and if so, he should be punished severely."

So privately they set watch upon him, and it was discovered that he did indeed take for his own uses the contributions of the pious, but he did not know of the watch or the discovery.

The deacons appointed a committee to confer with the pastor as to what were best to be done, and they laid all of the proof before him.

"It is clear," said the pastor, "that our poor brother is guilty of theft. But is his salary sufficient to meet the modest needs of himself and his wife?"

The deacons agreed that it wasn't.

Then said the pastor, "Out of my pocket will I pay the sums that he has taken, as nearly as they can be estimated, and we will raise his salary, and appoint two of you deacons to help our poor brother count the collections. We have led him into temptation."

It was so done.

And it came to pass that the poor brother, out of his increased salary, paid back to the church four times the amount of his pilferings.

## THE TREASURE

ONCE a poor man digging in a field found a great treasure, and fell to wondering what he would do with it. "It has lain here many years," said he, "and here it is safe. I will cover it up, and leave it until I can make up my mind."

So he returned to his house in the village, and said nothing to any of his family. But his wife noticed that he was restless, and that all during the night he could not sleep, and she wondered what ailed him. But with all of her questioning, she could get nothing out of him, and in the morning she was angry.

With early dawn the poor man returned to the field. He would see that the treasure was safe. It was there in its place snugly hidden. And the poor man fell to dreaming what a great figure he and his would cut in the world. His heart was filled with pride, and already he felt the first prickle of scorn for the lowly. "Oh, we shall have silks and satins and carriages and horses," he said, "and gems in great number. And our former neighbors will gape with envy and wonder."

He couldn't decide what to do with the treasure. His house was frail and easy to enter. He was afraid to risk it there. He distrusted banks and bankers, for he had heard that banks were robbed and that bankers themselves were sometimes the robbers. And he dared not trust the treasure to the keeping of any of his neighbors. So he sat

all day in the field, and watched the place of its concealment.

This went on day after day, and he could do nothing except puzzle his mind with much thinking. This plan and the other for safeguarding the treasure was thought of and rejected. Hardly could he tear himself away when dark came. His nights were full of disquiet. And he was off to the field with the first peep of day. Still he could never make up his mind.

His neighbors, passing, saw that he did no work, but sat long in one place, and then paced restlessly back and forth, back and forth. And one neighbor, more curious than others, noticed that the poor man halted always at one spot and gazed at the ground, as if he were thinking, trying to decide about something. "What can it be?" said the neighbor. "To-night I will come, take a look. Perchance I may profit."

In the dead of the night came the neighbor, dug up the treasure, and carried it away to another concealment.

Next morning the poor man saw but a gaping hole where the treasure had been. He threw himself on the ground bewailing his lot, and cursing the thief who had stolen the treasure, and sobbing bitterly, cried, "Oh, I wish I had made up my mind. I wish I had made up my mind."

## THE DECEITFUL DOLLAR

ONCE upon a time there was a poor little deceitful dollar that found itself alone in the pocket of a workingman. It felt so small and lonesome that it sighed aloud. The workingman was quite astonished to hear so great a sigh coming out of a pocket so nearly empty. He reached in and pulled out the lonesome dollar, and asked it, "What is the matter with you? One would think that your heart is bursting."

"Alas, it is," said the dollar.

"But why?" asked the workingman.

"I am lonesome," answered the dollar, "so miserably, damnably lonesome. I have been hoping against hope that I should get some companions, but now I am ready to cry. Outside of a few coppers and such trifling trash, I have had no company for days and days."

"There, there," said the workingman, "don't cry. You really ought to be proud. You are the last dollar I have, and I am keeping you for a luck piece. I am never going to spend you at all, whatever happens. I may get work again next week, and then you will have company. At any rate, cheer up. It makes a man downhearted to have such a melancholy luck piece."

"Well," said the dollar, "you would be melancholy too if you were put into a dark dungeon and kept there by yourself, as I am. I should like to circulate a little, to go about some, you know. That's what I was made for. I don't want to be

a luck piece, and there's no use in trying to make a luck piece out of me, because you never have any luck, anyway, and you never will have any till you change your way of doing."

"Why, what's that?" said the workingman, "I am honest, and I work hard when I can get a job. If a man like that doesn't deserve luck, who does? Tell me that."

"I didn't say anything about deserving luck," said the dollar, "I was merely talking about having luck. You haven't any luck, you never did have any luck, and you never will have any luck, because you will probably always be an honest workingman, which is the last sort of man that luck ever hits."

"You are a liar," said the workingman, "and you know it. Just for that I am going to spend you for a square meal. I am tired of being hungry, and besides I wouldn't have such a lying luck piece as you are. You are a failure as a luck piece, a miserable, sobbing, sighing, dismal failure."

And straightway the workingman sought out a restaurant, and spent the dollar for a square meal.

"Now, then," said he, as he handed the dollar to the cashier, "I hope you are satisfied. You will have plenty of company in the cash register."

"Yes," said the dollar, "I am satisfied," and chuckled, "ho! ho! I am satisfied, because I have had my way with you. You were a fool to think you could keep me. No man could ever keep a last dollar, because a dollar will sigh and weep and lie and do anything rather than stay alone. It will always hurry to get where there are lots of other dollars to keep it company."

The workingman stood scratching his head a

moment, and then he burst out with, "You may be a liar, but you spoke the truth that time, my hearty."

And grinning sheepishly, he went out to look for a job.

## SEX

ONCE upon a time a saint who had fled the world and taken refuge in the solitude of a wilderness, was found dead in his hermitage by two pilgrims. And in his hand was clutched a crumpled parchment. With reverential but hurried eagerness the pilgrims removed the parchment from his stiffened fingers, and spread it out to peruse his last pious exhortations. Great was their amazement to read what follows:

"O Passion, God knows whether you are good or evil — man doesn't. Philosophers scorn you, or pretend to, and you make hypocrites of their disciples, yea, of the philosophers themselves. Or it may be that their scorn is a fortress to defend them. If so, you smash it, you blow it up, and leave them to writhe in its ruins.

"O Passion, parsons endeavor to tame you. They tie you up in a harness. They bind and restrict you. Oh, they tie you as tight as they can. For the duration of a whole human life they seek to imprison you. And after they have bound you their strongest, still do they fear you. Looking at you askance, they wonder if their bonds will be able to hold you. Oh, you laugh at them, and compel them to bless you.

"O Passion, poets and painters worship you, as do all artists. You awake them to beauty. You thrill them with creative energy. You fill them with harmonies of form and of sound and of color.

Till you come, they are blind and lie dormant, inert, and listless. But with your coming is light and life and melody. Oh, you thrill them. They fall down and worship you. You are their ecstasy.

"O Passion, to every son of Adam you give moments of rapture, to sage and simpleton, to banker and beggar, to priest and profligate. Let them deny you. They pay for their folly. You strain them to breaking if they defy you. Oh, they may twist and struggle and pray, but escape you? — No, no, they do not escape you. Ha! they are so fashioned that they must welcome you while fighting against you. They pet you, gloat on you, embrace you, during the battle. And in their secret hearts they cherish you.

"O Passion, you make wise men fools, and enlighten the simple. You pull down kings, and exalt the lowly. You can transform arctic regions into Elysian bowers, and temper the heat of the desert to the coolness of green dells on a mountain. You paint the sunset and ensilver the moon. You can glorify poverty and illumine despair.

"O Passion, some say that you are good, and some that you are evil. I know not, but I know you are immortal, or, at least, that you will live until the last human son gasps out his breath on the shoreless edge of time. And then — "

. . . . . .

"Ha! the old hypocrite!" thought one of the pilgrims.

But the thought of the other was, "Oh, the dear, good saint, I never suspected his struggles."

## LIMITATION

A MONK in his cloister prayed, "O God, I would be good. I yearn to be good, just good. I pray thee, O God, help me to be good. Guard me from evil. Preserve me from temptation. Make me good."

He rose from his knees, and went out into the streets of the city.

A harlot in her brothel prayed, "O God, I would be good. I yearn to be good, just good. I pray thee, O God, help me to be good. Rescue me from this life of evil. O God, make me good."

She rose from her knees, and went out into the streets of the city.

The monk and the harlot met. He drew close his cassock, so that she should not touch it in passing, lest she should defile him. And he thought, "The devil hath sent her, this evil woman. Oh, well for me that I have fortified my spirit with prayer. She would lead me astray, but I feel the protecting arms of God thrown about me."

And the harlot, she thought, "Oh, here is a holy man of God. How closely he drew his robe about him, lest it should touch me. Oh, I am indeed not worthy to touch the hem of his garment. Oh, he is good. He is indeed good, the blessed man of God."

And they went on their separate ways.

The harlot never knew or dreamed or imagined how the monk in the long hours of darkness writhed in passion, how many, many times he was at the

point of seeking out her or some of her sisters, how it required all of his strength, his piety, and the fear of detection to restrain him.

The monk never knew or dreamed or imagined how the harlot yearned to be good, how she prayed for forgiveness, how she revered his piety, and how unworthy she felt in his presence.

But one may hear an evil whisper, "If instead of going on their separate ways, they had gone together and had come to some secret place! What then?"

Perhaps it might have been as the whisperer imagines. Such at least is the wisdom of cassock and cloister, but possibly their prayers might have been answered. And as it is, the harlot still is a harlot, and the monk still is afraid of defilement.

How God must pity his poor creatures!

## MALE AND FEMALE

ONCE upon a time there was a beautiful woman for whom men did whatever she wanted. And she was proud of her power, and boasted that no man could withstand her. And yet to none save her husband had she ever yielded her body.

And it happened that there was a certain judge in the land who had decided a cause adversely to the wish of the woman. So she went to see him in private to induce him to recall the decision. He heard her plea with attention, and noted her looks and demeanour, her gesture and glances and blushes and the soft modulations of her voice accustomed to wheedle. And the touch of her hand on his arm so natural as to seem unintended, went not unheeded. Still was the judge not moved, but firmly upheld his decision, saying it was just and must stand without changing.

The woman, surprised, entreated him at length, besought him with tears, but he still was unmoved. And then she said, "Tell me, why is it? You are the first man with whom I have failed. And most of the others I have not begged, have not stooped to beg. I have had but to ask."

"Ah, madam, if I tell you the truth, I fear you will hate me," said the judge.

"No, no," said the woman, "believe me, I will not."

"Well," said the judge, "perhaps it doesn't matter, for you probably hate me already, so I will

tell you. When you have bought goods from a shopman or food in the market-place, the men that you bought from, sold to you at a lesser price or gave you the choice of their wares?"

"Yes, that is true," said the woman.

"So waiters in hotels and clerks and officials of one kind and another have given you preference or waived regulations at your simple request. And have smiled and bowed and been acquiescent."

"Yes, that is true, but how did you know it?"

"I know it because I perceive that you belong to a certain class of women for whom men always do things of that sort."

"And what class of women is that?"

"The women who seem ever to promise — to promise what only women can give. To them anything masculine is a challenge. I don't know whether or not they can help it. I am not blaming them or you, but it is the thrill of sex that they impart to every male whom they touch, and it seems as if they are compelled to impart it. And it arouses a feeling in the man that if circumstances were different, perhaps just slightly different — oh, it is as if the mind of the man and the mind of the woman met and embraced — and it seems the fault of circumstances, not of the woman, that the embrace is mental only. And it is so with all sorts and conditions of men."

"Mentally then we are unchaste?" cried the woman in anger. "We trade on our sex with all sorts and conditions of men! And they are complaisant to us?"

"Well," said the judge, "that is putting it quite harshly. I see I should never have begun — "

"Tell me then," interrupted the woman, "why is it that you are impervious? Are you not masculine? Are you not a male?"

"Alas," said the judge, "I am not. I am but a masquerader. When I was a very young man, I was wounded in battle, and I — I — it — it —"

"You, you wretched impostor, and I had hoped to get justice from you!" sneered the woman in scorn as she marched from the room.

And oddly enough it was the judge who blushed and felt guilty.

## CONSOLATION

ONCE there was a man who was filled with a passion for beauty. And he yearned to make something that would inspire the hearts of all people with joy to behold it. For he thought that nothing else could justify a human life except its creation of beauty. That alone made life worthy of honor.

So he endeavored to paint pictures that should surpass the triumphs of the old masters, but, alas, the power was not given him, and he failed. His pictures were poor and common in spite of the labor that he lavished upon them.

And he had the rare gift of seeing the defects and shortcomings in the things that he created. So in poetry and in sculpture, despite years of training and effort, his toil was in vain. At last he knew that neither poem nor statue nor painting created by him would give joy to his fellows. And he was bowed down with sorrow because the gift was denied him.

And wailing, he lamented, "O God, why is it that I have failed? Why is it that I can do nothing worthy? Oh, I am full of the worship of beauty. Oh, I thrill with the feeling of beauty. And I can not express it — neither in word nor in form nor in color. Oh, what shall I do?"

And there came from somewhere an answer, "There is yet a nobler expression than in word or form or color. The highest mode of expression

is not in these, but in deeds. Content thyself, because to thee is given the power. Thou canst live beauty."

And there broke on him then a great light, and he did a thing that was better than painting a picture or writing a poem or carving a statue, because each of these is at best a hint, a memorial, or a prophecy of some such thing as he did.

For all men said of him, "God bless him, he lived a beautiful life."

## QUITE SO

I AM said to be lovely and altogether admirable, yet everywhere I go I make people uncomfortable. Between friends I am unbearable. Sometimes I thrust my way into churches, or am lugged in, and then there is hard feeling. Usually the trouble arises between parson and deacons. And the elders say the preacher had no business to bring me in, but ought to have confined himself to preaching the gospel.

Now and again some foolish professor in college or university takes up with me, and can not forget me while he lectures. So his mind wanders from the ancient and hoary traditions that he should inculcate on his pupils. His companionship with me or championship of me gets noised abroad. Then he is rebuked and dismissed for his folly. It seems to me they all ought certainly to know better, but some of them will never learn anything practical.

And even as wise and astute as are most politicians, not always do they remember to avoid me. Every now and then one is fascinated by me for a moment, so that he does not see clearly, and speaks before he has much time for thinking. So his dalliance with me is discovered. His prospects are ruined, though he gives out many denials. He is no longer a safe and a sane politician.

I am suppressed by a great many people — and most newspapers. They find my suppression quite profitable, and therefore by no means unpleasant.

To financiers and diplomatists I am fatal. No man wants me brought home to him, so I am homeless. But they clothe me, for I am too ugly when naked. And they feed me with dope and narcotics, yet I am sleepless.

More often than not I am disguised and dressed up in colors that make me look different. In the hands of my foes I am twisted and broken, and the majority of my friends are afraid to defend me.

Yet I live on. I am immortal. I have inspired some seers and some prophets. But the most of them have never known me. I am — THE TRUTH.

## THE EGG OF DREAMS

ONCE upon a time there was a man who bought an egg, intending to eat it. But as he walked along with the egg in his hand, he fell to thinking. And his thoughts ran after this fashion — "I will not eat this egg, for it is the seed of a flock of a thousand chickens. I will rather save it, and when one of my neighbors sets a hen, I will get leave to put this egg under her. And I will mark it, so that we may know what chick is hatched from it, for we will watch carefully at the time of the hatching.

"Then I will take that chick and rear it. I can easily spare the time needed to tend one chicken, and the cost will be next to nothing. When the chicken is grown into a hen, I will take the eggs that she will lay and put them all aside to be hatched. And when they are hatched, I will save from that brood all of the pullets. And the eggs that they lay, I will preserve in like manner to be hatched by them."

"And in order to keep my flock going, I will sell from each brood all of the cockerels except enough for breeding, and with the money received will I buy feed for the rest of the chickens. From now on I will make it the rule of my life under no circumstances to eat or sell a single egg descended from this one, and never will I eat or sell a single hen or a pullet.

"The consequence of this line of action must inevitably be that I shall accumulate an immense

flock of fowls. In a few years they will run into thousands. Half of them will be cockerels. From the sale of these I shall derive a handsome income, so that I shall be independent. And the hens will go on laying and the flock increasing till the day of my death. If I live very long, I shall be rich.

"Just think, I was about to eat this egg. In one moment I should have consumed thousands of chickens. So people go carelessly along destroying whole fortunes for a gratification so small as not to be worth considering. I am glad that I am more thoughtful. I have in my hand now a competence, and I shall not be so foolish as to squander it. No, I am on the high road to prosperity, and I will follow it to its certain end."

So thinking, he was jubilant. From one of his neighbors he readily got leave to put his egg under a hen that was sitting. And he marked the egg carefully. When the time for hatching drew nigh, he and the neighbor kept watch, looking at the egg from time to time, to be sure that they might know what was hatched from it.

But the time came and went. The hen sat faithfully on the egg along with the others. The man and his neighbor watched with care. But at last the truth became clear. Hope could no longer disguise it. The egg was infertile.

## INTROSPECTION

ONCE there was a man whose eyes were turned inward. He looked always at his own heart, and examined himself with narrow attention. Not for him were the beauties of nature. Not for him the virtues or vices of others, the joys or sorrows, the play of emotion, none of the harvest that is reaped by an eye that looks outward into a world full of varied and beautiful things. No, he must look ever inward.

And as he looked, lo! he discovered in his own heart a canker. At first it was small, hardly could he see it. But his eye was fastened upon it. And as he gazed, it grew ever larger. And more than ever was he unable to tear his eye from it. And it seemed it would spread all over his heart. So the man pitied himself, and sighed, and was sad.

"Oh, this horrible canker," he wailed, "this horrible canker! It will kill me. I know it. It will kill me."

And as he sat wailing, there passed by a friend and asked of the man whose eyes were turned inward, "What ails you? Why do you weep?"

And the man told the friend about the horrible canker, saying, "It will kill me. It will kill me."

But the friend said, "Do you know the notary's daughter?"

"No, I don't know her," answered the man.

"Come with me," said the friend.

The man pulled back and protested, but the

friend would take no denial. He seized the man's arm, and pushed him and pulled him till they came into the house of the notary, where sat the notary's daughter. And the friend made known the one to the other.

"This man looks ever inward and has a canker in his heart," said the friend, "can you cure him?"

"No," said the notary's daughter, "I fear not. If the poor man looks ever inward, I fear he is doomed."

But she smiled, and was beautiful, oh, so beautiful, and her voice was like music.

The ears of the man who looked ever inward were charmed, and his eyes were snatched from their looking inward for a glance at the notary's daughter. And never again could he turn his eyes inward, for they would always be seeking the notary's daughter. So he forgot all about the horrible canker, and it grew smaller and smaller, till it vanished. The rule of its being was that it must be watched, and the man no longer could watch it.

It may be some other outward thing would have served as well, but the fact is, the man who looked ever inward fell in love with the notary's daughter.

## BODY

ONCE upon a time there was a woman who lived in a hotel, and did nothing useful from morning to night. She was married, but she was the mother of no children. Most of her waking time was spent in submitting her body to the ministration of other people.

When she arose in the morning, her body was bathed and clothed by a maid. Then it was fed with breakfast cooked by other hands and brought to her by a waiter and after a while it was rubbed and kneaded by a masseuse, and again clothed by a maid. And then came to it the service of a hairdresser, and thereafter a manicurist, and next a chiropodist, and then a physician felt of it, listened to it, and inspected it. And the hour of lunch was at hand, so the body was again clothed by the maid, and again fed by a waiter.

After lunch it was disrobed by the maid, then clothed by her more lightly, and comfortably arranged by her on a bed to be revived by a nap from the fatigue of its morning exertions. The nap over, the body was again clothed by the maid, and was fed tea and cakes by a waiter. It was then transported by an elevator boy to the ground floor, and taken by a chauffeur for an afternoon ride in an automobile. And having been brought back by him, it was again disrobed and re-clothed by the maid for dinner, when it was again fed by a waiter, transported by an elevator boy back to

the upper floor, retouched by the maid, again transported by the elevator boy and the chauffeur, and deposited at the opera.

At the opera it was in large measure bared by its husband to a hoped-for admiration from onlookers. It sat through the opera, and was thereafter transported to a restaurant, and again fed by a waiter, and transported back to the hotel by a chauffeur. It was then disrobed, nightrobed, and tucked in bed by the maid. And the husband came to it, which was its justification and reason for being and means of support.

And the body grew ever fatter and engulfed the mind and smothered the will of her whom it possessed and dominated, so that the only emanations from the mind were fatuous follies and from the will feeble complaints. And the husband wondered why his wife was not happy, and other women envied her because she had to do nothing, while she scorned all of those other women who had to work and who envied her. And she deemed herself superior to them, and in fact was quite generally regarded as superior to them — so what would you have?

# THE ARTIST

IN a great city there lived once an artist. He was a painter of beautiful pictures. His inspiration was true, and his technique faultless, still he was not popular. The people of his time, when they noticed his paintings at all, jeered at them, or, at best, were indifferent, for they were a light-minded generation.

For years the artist toiled away, and produced a multitude of pictures, both landscapes and portraits. And all of them swam in an atmosphere of spiritual loveliness, and revealed the truth. As he himself looked at his pictures he was filled with a fervor of feeling, they seemed to him so beautiful, but alas! few or none shared that feeling. So he was downcast and despondent.

His friends came and remonstrated with him, saying, "Why don't you paint after the style of So-and-so or the fashion of This-and-that? They are greatly admired and are overwhelmed with praise and with money?"

So the artist would visit the galleries where were hung the paintings of these rivals, and he would pore over them seeking for beauty. "But they seem to me cheap and artificial, and faulty both in form and in color," he would say to himself. "They have no atmosphere, they breathe no truth, they are false. But it may be that I am mistaken. Everybody says they are beautiful. Oh, well, I will try an imitation, and perhaps I shall win the admiration of the crowd."

So he went to his studio, took up his palette, his mahl-stick, and brushes, squeezed out his colors, and set himself to produce something after the fashion of This-and-that or the style of So-and-so. But he could not. The more he tried the more he could not. Constantly something reproached him, saying, "You are betraying the gift that God gave you."

But something else said, "No, it is better to follow these rivals; they have the stamp of popular approval. You have been too insistent on your own notions. It may be that you have no gift of creation, and are but a fool to have thought so. How little likely is it that you alone are right and all others wrong."

The artist wrung his hands in despair and could do nothing. So he painted no more. He sat listless all day, because the crowd would not praise him; he could not catch their fancy.

Overcome with chagrin, he died disappointed. The next generation called him a master, and uttered his name with great reverence, while the fame of his rivals had vanished, for indeed their work was but trivial.

## THE QUEER COUNTRY

I MET once a great traveller and asked him this question, " O traveller, of all of the places that you have found or frequented what place was the oddest? "

And he answered, " That place I have not found, but I seek it. I dreamed of a place, and I go about seeking it, and it is a queer place, wherever it is, because in it each vice and each virtue has its own proper odor. And the people are such that they perceive every odor and properly judge it.

" And in that place was a woman telling her sins to a priest in the confessional. But the odor she gave out was not that of contrition — it was quite other, so the priest peeped through the lattice to see if she were fair in appearance, and then prescribed as her penance that she should visit him the next evening. And she knew what he wanted, for the odor emitted by him was not the odor of holiness — he was a foul priest, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

" And so there met on the street two former friends who had had a difference, and a coolness had arisen between them. And each thought the other was harboring hate still, as they had done. But lo! as they passed, the odor of love was wafted from each to the other, and they stopped, and embraced, and were happy.

" And a man was found at the scene of a hideous crime, and an awful suspicion would have fastened upon him, but he protested his innocence, and the

odor of truth exhaled from his body, so he was not even suspected.

"And when suitors came to their wooing, it was easy for women to know whether love or greed or ambition were in the heart of each suitor. And in that country marriages were happy and lasting. And lies were infrequent, because they were useless, for the odor of lying was like the stench of some putrid carcass.

"Wasn't that an odd country? — I never have found it. But sometimes as I approach a large city and pass through the slums that surround it, I think for a moment I must have discovered the country I seek, so strong is the odor of lying. But always I have found other sources from which this odor proceeded. And again I have happened on a cottage embowered in flowers, and have been almost persuaded that it was the perfume of love that dilated my nostrils."

## YES

"SINCE the world began and now, there are and have been many candidates for greatness. Various have been the claims, and no less various the awards. Men have vied with each other in every form of contest that they might be accounted great," soliloquized the bent and gray philosopher in his bare attic, "and I, I too have had the dream.

"Perhaps not all those with the fame of greatness have deserved it. Perhaps many without that fame were truly great, who shall say? Somehow I, in my own person, have missed it. Age and poverty and meditation have lifted me above the clouds of vanity that once obscured my vision.

"What was it wherein I failed? — I had the intelligence. In all the schools none was brighter than I. That intelligence was trained and enriched by laborious study. No one of my peers was master of wider dominions of knowledge.

"And will? — I had the will. I conquered and held in subjection the wild impulses of the body. I bowed in slavish subservience to no man whether prince or philosopher. Yea, I could not be bound even with the ropes of sex. No fleering woman ever exulted over me. Are there many who can say so much?

"And courage? — My spirit has never quailed before danger. I have dared to hazard my life for my opinion. I have flung the truth in the face of tyranny. I have stood alone and unafraid against the jeering mob. Aye, that's it, alone. I have

stood alone. In my old age I sit here and ponder without a companion. I dwell apart.

"And why? — Courage, will, and intelligence have won for me no comrades. Aye, men are fools, fools to shut their hearts. I could inspire them, govern them, guide them. But no, they shut me out. Ah me, I have long known them to be weak, foolish, vain, lustful, greedy — but above all weak and foolish, mere puny midges buzzing in the sun, crawling along the earth — and I have despised them. And I am not great. That I know.

"But if knowing their foolish weakness, I still had loved and served them, I wonder — "

## CONDESCENSION

ONCE there was a poor man who lived in a pine forest not far from a big city. Christmas was approaching, and the poor man had no gifts for his family. So he said to himself, "I will cut some of the smallest of these pine trees that but choke up the forest, and perhaps I can sell them in the city for Christmas trees, and with the money buy gifts for my family."

But he was not familiar with cities, and knew not how many poor people dwelt in them. And it happened that he stopped in the poorest quarter of that city, and began to cry the sale of his little pine trees. They looked very green and smelt very fragrant, so that a crowd gathered about him. But what a crowd. They were clothed in rags and shivered with cold.

There was a wan woman among them who clasped in her arms a squalid baby, and two ragged children clung to her skirts. And she looked at the trees very wistfully, for they reminded her of the green woods of her childhood. And the poor man, seeing her, asked her if she and the others about her had no better clothes and were as poor as they looked.

And she answered, "Yes, we are desperately poor, and have but little either to wear or to eat."

Then the poor man said, "I will give you a tree, and one also to each of the others."

And he gave away all of the trees, and went back and brought other loads until he had given a tree

to each of the families in that quarter of the city. And he received nothing from them but thanks — and the glow in his heart that came from his giving.

When he returned to his home and told his wife about all of this giving, she said, " But the children and I — what shall we do? Now we shall have nothing for Christmas. And I thought you were getting much money, and have told them to expect many presents."

So she sat down and wept.

The glow died out of the heart of the poor man, and he wished he never had thought of taking any trees to the city. But at last he bethought him, and said to his wife, " Gather up all of the children, and I will take you and them into the city for a trip, and that will be something for Christmas."

So he carried them all to the city, which delighted the children, and the people there said to the wife, " Your husband must be a rich man to give away so many beautiful trees. Oh, how we should love to be rich like you and your husband."

And the wife, pleased beyond measure, replied, " Oh, we are glad to share what we have with others not so fortunate. We think it a duty. We are not giving our children any presents this Christmas, because we think it more Christian to give to the needy."

## A FABLE

ONE time the scales fell from the eyes of a certain man, so that he could see through everything. No artifice or cunning was impervious to his glance. Hidden thoughts were as clear to him as the day. As he went about on his round of business or duty, he saw many, many things that he had never before suspected, and nothing deceived him.

But there was so much evil in the world, that he was an unhappy man. He saw the selfish motive behind the smile of friends. He saw avarice cloaked in piety, and crafty deceit in the guise of good fellowship. And he saw simulated pity betray innocence, and hideous sins beneath their plaster of benevolence. Under his gaze wifely affection became a servility that sprang from fear of privation. And lust leered through the mask once worn by love. Ambition was but vanity, or greed for gold and power, and fame was empty notoriety. Everywhere stretched the dominion of self, and altruism had fled the world. Even the cries of children were but puling pleas to be fed.

So one day he prayed that God would give back to him the old dimness of vision. He wished again to walk in the semi-luminous darkness that had once enveloped him. He wanted again to believe that the minister was moved only by his sincere love of mankind and reverence toward God. He wanted to believe that the lawyer was an advocate of justice, and the public official the servant of his people. He wanted to believe the artist an apostle

of the beautiful, and every poet a devotee of truth. He wanted to believe in wifely purity, and the filial piety of sons and daughters.

But God answered him and said, "No, my son, it is impossible. Even the Almighty can not turn back the flight of time. What you pray for is youth. You have become an old man."

## THE GREATEST GIFT

ONCE upon a time there was a man who prayed that God might bestow on him the best of all gifts, whatever that might be. He was a good and sincere man, so his prayer was speedily answered, yet I doubt if he knew it.

In spite of poverty and the diseases that from time to time afflicted him, he was content. He rejoiced in the exceeding prosperity of his friends, and sympathized with his enemies in their adversity. Neither of these could he do before the gift had been granted him. But it had been hardest for him then to look without envy, or think without detraction, on the success of friends who seemed more fortunate than himself.

He visited jails and penitentiaries, and perceived that their inmates were sometimes more sinned against than sinning, and that even if sinning, they had struggled as best they could toward righteousness. In the heart of every criminal he saw the bud that might be made to blossom into probity. So the yearning after purity striving beneath the meretricious smiles of abandoned women was clear to his vision.

No slightest particle of good in any human being could escape his eye. Even the ungrateful son or the unfilial daughter was to him rarely quite wicked. Their moments of repentance, their impulses toward reparation, loomed large in his sight. In the unfaithful wife and negligent mother he saw the bitter

regret and the intense longing for re-union with husband and children. Strive as she might to hide the gnawing tenderness under an outward hardness of demeanour, it was evident to his gaze, and could not be hidden from him.

When people were no longer good, but altogether overcome and conquered by their vices, still he saw in them, or remembered, the truth or beauty or grace or goodness that once was theirs, and remembering, pitied and sought to relieve their fallen condition, not as one reaching down from a height, but as one who would rise with them.

And this man whose prayer had been granted, became happier than any of his fellows.

And the gift that was bestowed upon him?—Ah, that was the eye of affection.

## A HELLISH DREAM

I WAS in Hell. His majesty, Satan, led me here and there to show me the sights of his kingdom. 'Twas dreary — and stupid. Crowd after crowd of tormented sinners, but not much variety. I was struck by the paucity of human invention. So few were the crimes and the vices sufficing to people that Tophet. The catalogue read like a dull iteration — murder, and theft, and adultery, and then adultery and murder and theft. It was boring. The Devil yawned as he led me.

"Great fools, these," said he between yawns, "they all ought to have known better. But, no, nothing would do them but to crowd in here, and fill this place up to complete suffocation. Thousands of years ago I used to expect something original, but now I have given up hope, a — h," he yawned, "I am bored to extinction. Same old thing over again, new batches every day and nothing amusing. What your world needs most is imagination."

"Your Majesty is right," I said, "as usual, but folks are as God made 'em."

"I wouldn't say that," the Devil replied, "but really I don't care to argue questions of religion. It's fatiguing, and nothing new can be added. Yet I have understood that in the beginning all was innocence, and vice was a human idea. Just what one would have expected — dullest thing on earth, and they must spend most of their time at it."

I was peeved, so answered him tartly, "I don't know that devils are so famous for brightness.

What have they done to be proud of? I have read widely and travelled about, and I never have heard of any very smart wile of a devil."

"Not needed," said Satan, "you give us no stimulus. It's our business to snare and entrap you, and that's so easy. Make a big road, smooth to travel, and fill it full of pitfalls in plain open sight, and here you come tumbling, one generation after another. It's disgusting. Can't you learn anything from each other's experience?"

"No, not much," I admitted, "generally each of us has to experience a thing for himself."

"Well, you see where it lands you," said he. "If you don't do better, I am going to take up some avocation. I must have something to interest me, some mental diversion. It's hell to stay here and be bored this way all of the time."

"As for me, I crave your pardon," said I, "I never had thought — "

"That's just the trouble," he interrupted, "that's the trouble with all of you. Why don't you think? Sometimes you go through the motions, but you don't get anywhere, same old notion that you can get by on a road with a chasm dug plumb across it — do you call that a thought? Never a one of you gets by, all wind up here. I tell you I am tired of it."

"Well," said I, "I must be going. I just dropped in for a few minutes out of curosity."

"Yes, that's what they all say," replied the Devil.

"Meaning?" I exclaimed in alarm.

"Meaning that you are a damned soul now, and that's all there is to it." Again he yawned.

# THE LYING MASTER

I AM your master and you have made me. I say what you shall and shall not do, when you shall go or stay, succeed or fall, sink or swim, and still you have made me. I am your Frankenstein. I am more powerful than your will, stronger than your strength. And, ha! ha! you have made me.

Little did you think as you fashioned me bit by bit, that you were creating a tyrant. And you have been working at me steadily, steadily. Not a day has gone by, not an hour, nor even a minute that you have not wrought on me. Whether following your own will or that of another, still have you been creating me. I am the measure of your achievement, nay, I am your achievement — I am all of it.

And what of my power? — Why, I determine even your dreams and their fulfilment. I decide what thoughts enter your brain, what harbor you give them, what use is made of them. You are stirred with ambition — I kill or foster it. You thrill with love — I nourish or strangle it. My hand reaches out and holds you back from every endeavor, or is thrust under your arm to guide and uphold you. You look at my face to read defeat or victory, or there it is written, whether or not you can read it.

I am known only to you, and you never fully reveal me. I am all that you do know, and at times you deny me. You are proud of me, ashamed of me, afraid of me. You boast of me, and lie

in the boasting. You curse me and praise me, but you can never get rid of me. I ride on your shoulders. I am nearer and dearer than father or mother or wife or children. At times you rail on me and wish I were different. Yet no power can change me. I am the only thing you ever made that no power can change.

My life and yours are coterminous. If you had a previous existence, so did I. If immortal, so am I. I am always ending, yet never ended. Now, at this moment, I am done, and being created. Your hope, your energy, your life you put into me. Yet in the making, ofttimes you are careless. But careless or not, asleep or awaking, you achieve me. You, each of you, every son and daughter of man and woman, achieve me. If you make nothing else, you make me, and I am your master. Ha! ha! each of you fashions his master.

You may talk, you may rave, you may pray, but I am your master. Strut if you will, and declaim. That is a part of me. I incorporate it. I absorb it. I make of it a club with which to drive you, a chain with which to bind you, perhaps a buoy to sustain you. The criminals among you, how they fear me! The hypocrites among you, how they hide me! O you hypocrites, you scurry to hide me. Ha! ha! you scurry to hide me. Few indeed among you — hypocrites, criminals, or others — few, indeed, can look at my face without blushing.

Am I a demon? — No. An angel? — No. A human? — No. Oh, I am a time and a place and an action. I am one and a million. I am YOUR PAST.

## AN ENEMY

ONCE upon a time there was a man who lived in a city, and he made it his business to do everything that the other inhabitants of that city did, so far as he was able. He even thought what they thought, when he could find out what it was, and he had no other idea than to run with the crowd both in its thinking and in its doing.

When the crowd was patriotic, he shouted abroad his love of the country. When it was religious, he exuded the odor of sanctity. If timid, he was the most frightened of all, and trumpeted his fears the loudest. If it pounced upon and denounced some unlucky mortal, he was the fiercest.

It struck him as the height of pure folly that any one should harbor ideas or perform deeds that were different. "Why, the fool will become unpopular," he would think with great scorn, "he will lose the good will of the people. What is he about? Has he no sense? Doesn't he know that such things are not thought and done?"

In all of his life there never was anything real. It was the mode to marry, so he married. It was the mode to be unfaithful to one's wife, so he was unfaithful. To go to church, so he went, as long as the mode lasted. To smile and lie and cheat and pretend, so he smiled and lied and cheated and pretended. And he applauded himself for his cunning.

And he talked all of the time of the incomparable charms of his city, of its splendid past

and glorious future, the virtue of its women, the valor of its men, and its commercial prosperity. And he shouted aloud all of these pretences. The women were no more virtuous, nor the men more valorous, nor the city more prosperous, than others, but that mattered not. Perhaps he didn't know, certainly he didn't care.

Now one would think that this man would have been despised by his fellows, he was so empty and shallow. But the fact was quite different. Everybody liked him. He was invited to all manner of parties. His church was proud of him, and made him a deacon. His party chose him for office. His wife was envied by most other women, because he succeeded in making a great deal of money. And many of the mothers who dwelt in that city, pointed him out to their sons as a model.

## THE LAST VISITOR

WITH, or without invitation, he comes to palace and hovel, and makes himself at home. Oh, he thrusts his way in where he is hated, feared, fought against with despairing energy. Rudely he thrusts his way in. Or he comes gently, like an angel of peace, where he is expected, patiently awaited, longed for with yearning. Freedom he brings in his hands and the balm of sure healing. Of his welcome he recks not.

The pale, slender woman, betrayed and deserted, calls him untimely into her brothel. "Oh, come to my arms," she cries, "my only true lover. Thou art, and thou alone, constant. Embrace me, I love thee. Release me from shame and contrition. Oh, shield me from reproach and harsh censure. Oh, hide me from scorn and from anger. Take me to thy bosom, and fly with me to some far country where shall be forgotten the pain and the anguish that here I have suffered. Father and mother have turned from me. Sister and brother must hate me. Come thou and take me, make me thy bride."

The rich and the mighty, when riches and power have flown on the wings of the wind, yearn for this visitor. "Oh, we have lost all our riches," wail they, "and gone is our power. The rabble of the streets will jeer and rejoice at our misfortune. They will wag their heads and point fingers of scorn in our faces. Oh, how are we fallen! The low, vulgar, common people will exult and be glad because we have fallen. Impotence, disgrace,

and contumely will be our sad portion. Oh, come to us, visitor. Thou alone canst comfort us, free us from misery. Oh, come and release us."

But it matters not. This wilful visitor stalks into the cottage where bends the young mother over the cradle. "Back, back!" she cries, "come not, fell stranger. I forbid thee. I implore, entreat thee. Oh, on bended knees, as suppliant, I pray thee, come not. Oh, there are other places where thou art welcome. Go there! Oh, spare us thy visit. Oh, for a little while, spare us thy visit." — But, no! Unfeeling, the grim visitor stalks in. He heeds not cries nor tears nor prayers. He goes everywhere, and as the wind snatches the perfume of blossoms, so takes he the lives of the innocent.

To serene old age that looks forward to heaven, that bright of eye, sure of hope, strong of faith, sits with folded hands looking forward to heaven, he comes as a blessing. Like a passing shadow that but dims for a moment the light of the soul, he flits and is gone. And we dream that the lustre is brighter after his passing. Oh, we trust that somehow the lustre is brighter.

And he comes to us all — rich and poor, high and low, young and old, father and mother, brother and sister, sweetheart and lover, husband and wife, saint and sinner — he comes to us all. But in truth he deserves not the blame nor the credit. He is only a servant. He can not help coming. 'Tis some higher power that orders his coming, and before It he cringes.

## IN ME

IN me there dwell two spirits, a master and a slave. But which the master? Which the slave? One, I know, doth sit in judgment, and one is judged. But at times the judge is cowed, brow-beaten, till his judgments lose their force — become rather mere complaints, recriminations. Then strength is with the judged, the doer, though his deeds be evil. The judge should be the master, always the master, commanding. But alas! in me it is not so.

The doer, left to himself or in the ascendant, is heedless, rushes on to action, perhaps to foulness. And then, his impulse spent, sulks sullen, or more often is voluble in lies before the judge, seeking to justify himself in that his deeds have been no worse or not so bad as deeds of others. He tries to fool the judge with lies, to set up a standard that is false. And, I fear me, sometimes succeeds.

But when the judge is truly regnant, and the doer is the slave, then good work is done — clean, true work. And the doer looks up with joy to get his praise, hopes even for coddling, which, if he greatly gets, is bad for him. For then is he puffed to think himself much better than his fellows who dwell in other mortals. Oh, there is need that the judge in me shall be more stern than too indulgent.

At times the doer comes creeping home soiled and sodden and the judge lashes him with such fury

that the whimpering, guilty thing is in despair. The judge scourges him till almost is he crippled. The judge is then too harsh. It were not well to maim the doer, for how could he maimed perform the work that is needed to be done? Ah, no. It should rather be the province of the judge to discipline the doer with kindly firmness, to exact obedience by consistent rule. But alas! the judge himself in me doth waver and is pettish.

The doer yearns always to be free, imagines great things that he would do, were the carping judge but dead. Sometimes the doer plots to kill the judge, to rise in arms and boldly kill, or to thrust a secret dagger in his back. But in me he hath not yet done that. I think he never can do that. His courage will not stick, and then the judge is too vigilant. I would not trust the doer to be free. It is good to have the judge, even if he is not perfect. For the worst of all has been when the doer in some burst of freedom has escaped the judge and for a time run wild.

If judge and doer could be comrades full of a mutual love, I should be glad. If full of trust they could walk hand in hand until the judge should point out great and noble deeds and the doer should run forward to the joyous task, and after due performance should return, not to receive praise, but to learn of still nobler things that the judge had planned for him to do — oh! then I know I should be glad.

## THE PATIENT AND FAITHFUL

THE angels look down upon us, as does God. We are his handiwork. Perhaps they complain to him, saying, "Why is it? Why is it that men are so frail and so futile? Why were they made so in the first instance? Couldst thou have made them no better? We look at them and weep. They dim our gladness, for they fill us with pity."

And what should God answer? — Surely he can not blame the matter from which he has made us, for he made also the matter. Nor the time, nor the place, for they were of his choosing. Should he say that he made us perfect and that some power beyond him has marred us? Or should he assert that we are not frail and futile? — No, none of these, he couldn't say any of these.

Perhaps he does say, "Yes, they are frail and futile in the eyes of all creatures who see neither the end nor beginning. And they do dim your gladness. They dim their own gladness. But it is right, I wish it."

Perhaps he whispers then to the angels a secret, a glad secret that they must never, never tell, and their faces shine, because we no longer fill them with pity. They know then how we were made and why and what is our destiny. But they must keep the secret, as brothers and sisters hold back a joy to make it abundant.

Most of us are afraid and grow weary, and pester God with our questions. But perhaps to the patient and faithful among us he whispers

aforetime the secret that was told to the angels. Certain it is that among us the patient and faithful must know some secret, and I —I wonder what it can be.

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